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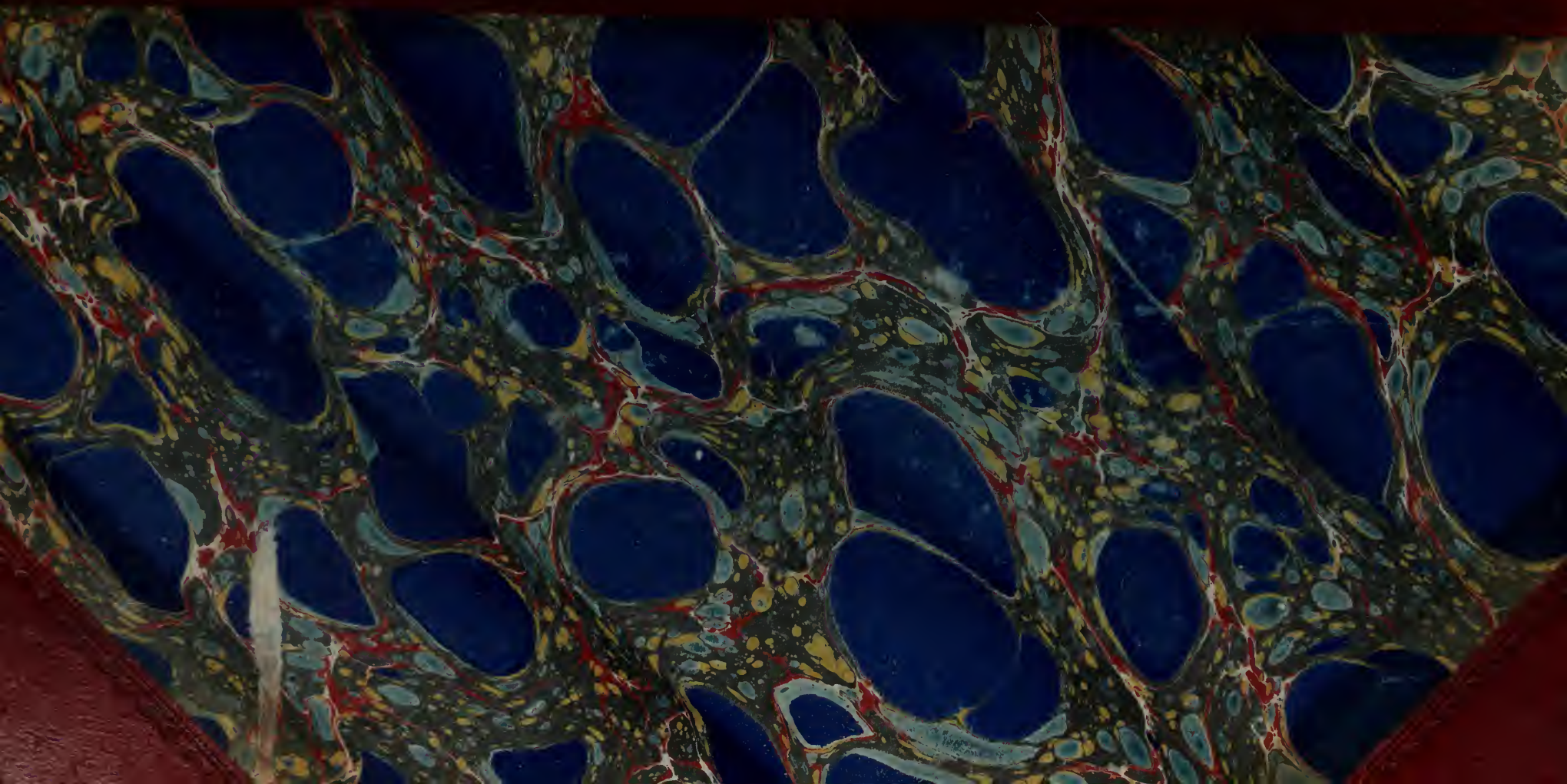

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M. ELLEN EDWARDS

J. SWAIN

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXII.

July to December, 1876.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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172, ST. JOHN STREET, E.C.

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THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XIX.

APPREHENSIONS.

THE fine old house, Eagles' Nest, lay buried in snow. It was Christmas-tide, and Christmas weather. All the Raynor family had assembled within its walls: with the exception of Dr. Raynor and his daughter Edina. Charles had come home from keeping his first term at Oxford; Alfred from school; Frank Raynor and his wife had returned from their sojourn abroad.

For, all these past months, during which we have lost sight of them, Frank and Daisy had been on the Continent. Close upon their departure from Trennach, Frank, through his medical friend, Crisp, was introduced to a lady who was going to Switzerland with her only son, a sickly lad of fifteen, in whom the doctors at home had hardly been able to keep life. This lady, Mrs. Berkeley, proposed to Frank to travel with them as medical attendant on her son, and she had not the least objection to Frank's wife being of the party. So, preliminaries were settled, and they started. Frank considered it a most opportune chance to have fallen to him while he was waiting for the lost money to turn up.

But the engagement did not last long. Hardly were they settled in Switzerland when the lad died, and Mrs. Berkeley returned to England. Frank stayed on where he was. The place and the sojourn were alike pleasant; and, as he remarked to his wife: who knew but he might pick up a practice there, amid the many English resident in the town, or flocking to it as birds of passage? Daisy was just as delighted to remain as he: they had funds in hand, and could afford to throw care to the wind. Even had care shown itself: which it did not. The

young are ever sanguine, rarely gifted with much forethought. Frank and his wife especially lacked it. Some odds and ends of practice did drop in to Frank, just a small case or so, at rare intervals: and they remained stationary for some time in perfect complacency. But when Christmas approached, and Frank found that his five hundred pounds would not hold out for ever, and that the notion of a practice in the Swiss town was but a castle in the air, he took his wife home again. By invitation, they went at once to Eagles' Nest.

The merry Christmas Day had passed, and some of the merry days immediately succeeding to it. On New Year's Day they were bidden to an entertainment at Sir Philip's Stane's; Major and Mrs. Raynor, Charles and Alice; a later invitation having come in for Frank and his wife. William Stane was a frequent visitor at Eagles' Nest whenever he was sojourning at his father's; and, though he had not yet spoken, few could doubt that the chief object to draw him thither was Alice Raynor.

Yes. Sunshine and merry-making, profusion and reckless expenditure reigned within the doors of Eagles' Nest; but little, save poverty, distress, and dissatisfaction, existed (speaking of the estate) beyond its gates. Mrs. Atkinson had ever been liberal in her care of the estate; the land had been enriched and thoroughly well kept; the small tenants and labourers cared for. One thing she had not done so extensively as she might: and that was, improve the dwellings of the labourers. Repairs she had made from time to time; but the places were really beyond repair. A few of them were like pigsties: and that was the best that could be said. Each tenement wanted one of two things: to be thoroughly renovated and to have an additional sleeping-room built; or else to be replaced by a new abode. During the last year of Mrs. Atkinson's life, she seemed to wake up suddenly to the necessity of something being done. Perhaps with the approach of death—which approach will often open our eyes to many things that they were closed to before—she saw the supineness she had been guilty of. Street the lawyer was hastily summoned to Eagles' Nest: he was ordered to procure plans and estimates for new dwellings. A long row (some thirty cottages in number) was hastily begun. While the builders were commencing their work, Mrs. Atkinson died. With nearly her last breath, she charged Mr. Street to see that the houses were completed, and that the pigsties (to distinguish them by that name) were also repaired and made healthy.

Mr. Street could only hand over the charge to the inheritor of the estate, Major Raynor. The reader may remember the Major spoke of it to Edina. Mr. Street could not do more than that, or carry out Mrs. Atkinson's wishes in any other way. And the Major did nothing. His will might have been good enough to carry out the charge, but he lacked the means. So much money was required for his own personal

wants that he had none to spare for other people. The ready money he came into had chiefly gone in paying his own back debts : until these debts stared him in the face in black and white, he had not believed he owed a tithe of them. Which is a very common experience. So the new dwellings were summarily stopped, and remained as so many skeletons : and the tumble-down pigsties, lacking proper space, and drainage, and whitewash, and everything else that could render them decent and healthy, grew worse day by day, and were an eyesore to spectators and the talk of the neighbourhood.

Not only did *they* suffer from the Major's lack of money and foresight ; there were many other crying wants : these are but given as a specimen. Above all, he was doing no good to the land, spending nothing to enrich it, and sparing necessary and ordinary labour. Perhaps had Major Raynor understood the cultivation and the needs of land, he might have made an effort to nourish his own better : as it was, it could but deteriorate day by day.

This state of things had caused a kind of antagonism to set in between Eagles' Nest and its poor dependents. The labourers and their families grumbled ; the Major, conscious of the state of affairs, and feeling some inward shame in consequence, but knowing at the same time that he was powerless to remedy it, shunned them. When complaints were brought to the house he would very rarely see the complainers. Mrs. Raynor and the elder children, understanding matters but very imperfectly, naturally espoused the Major's cause, and looked upon the small tenants as a most barbarous, insubordinate set of wretches, next kin to insurgents. When the poor wives or children fell sick, no succour was sent to them from Eagles' Nest. With this estrangement reigning, Mrs. Raynor did not attempt to help : not from coldness of heart, but that she considered they did not deserve to be helped, and moreover thought it would be flung back on her if she did attempt it. *There* was where the shoe pinched. The evil dwellings they were used to ; though indeed with every winter and every summer they grew more evil than ever ; but they were not accustomed to neglect in times of need. Mrs. Atkinson had been always a generous mistress : when sickness or sorrow or distress at slack times of work set in, her hand and purse were ever ready. Coals in the severe weather, Christmas cheer, warm garments for the scantily clad ; she had furnished all : and it was the entire lack of this aid that was so much felt now. The winter was unusually severe ; it frequently is so after a very hot summer ; labour was scarce, food dear ; and a great deal of sickness prevailed. So that you perceive all things were not so flourishing in and about Eagles' Nest as they might have been, and Major Raynor's bed was not entirely one of rose leaves.

But, things unpleasant that are out of sight, are, it is said, mostly out of mind—Mr. Blase Pellet told us so much a chapter or two back—

and the discomfort out of doors did not disturb the geniality within. At Eagles' Nest, the days floated on in a round of enjoyment; they seemed to be one continuous course of pleasure that would never have an end. Daisy Raynor had never been so happy in all her life: Eagles' Nest, she said, was like Paradise.

The music and the wax-lights, the flowers and the evergreens rendered the rooms at Sir Philip Stane's a scene of enchantment. At least it seemed so to Alice Raynor as she entered upon it. Something that you might read about in fairyland, but scarcely see in this prosaic life. William Stane stood near the door, and caught her hand as she and Charles were following their father and mother.

"The first dance is for me, remember, Alice," he whispered. And her pretty cheeks flushed and a half conscious smile of assent parted her lips, as she passed on to Lady Stane.

Lady Stane, a stout and kindly woman in emerald green, received her kindly. She suspected that this young lady might become her daughter-in-law some day or another, and she looked at her more critically than she had ever looked before. Alice could bear the inspection to-night: her new white dress was beautiful; her face was charming, her manner was modest and graceful. "The most lady-like girl in the room," mentally decided Lady Stane, "and no doubt will have a fair purse of money. William might do worse."

William Stane thought he might do very much worse. There's no doubt he was truly attached to Alice. Not perhaps in the wild and ardent manner which some lovers own to: all natures are not capable of that: but he did love her, and hoped that when he married it was she who would be his wife. He was not ready to marry yet. He was progressing in his profession, but with the proverbial slowness that is said to attend the advancement of barristers; and he did not mean to speak just at present. Meanwhile he was quite content to make love tacitly; and he felt sure that his intentions were understood.

His elder brother was not present this evening, and it fell to William to act as such and to dispense his favours, and himself as a partner, pretty equally; but every moment that he could snatch for Alice, was given to her; in every dance that he could crib from society's exactions, she was his partner.

"Have you enjoyed the evening, Alice?" he questioned in a whisper, as he was taking her to the carriage at three o'clock in the morning.

"I never enjoyed an evening half so much," was the shyly-breathed answer. And Mr. William Stane got possession of her hand as she spoke, and kept it in his to the last.

If this lighted-hearted carelessness did not come to an end! If freedom from trouble could but last for ever! Pleasure first, says

some wise old saw, pain afterwards. With the morning's dawn the pain came to Eagles' Nest.

Amid the letters delivered to Major Raynor was one from Oxford. It enclosed a very heavy bill for wine supplied to his son Charles: heavy, considering Mr. Charles's years, and the short duration of his one sojourn at the University. The Major stared at it, with his spectacles, and without his spectacles; he looked at the heading, he gazed at the foot; and finally when he mastered it he went into a passion, and ordered Charles before him. So peremptory was the summons, that Charles appeared in haste. His outburst of temper, when he found out what the matter was, quite equalled his father's.

"I'm sure I thought you must be on fire down here, sir," said he. "What confounded sneaks they are, to apply to you! I can't understand their doing it."

"Sneaks be shot!" cried the wrathful Major. "Do you owe all this, or don't you? That's the question."

"Why, the letter was addressed to *me!*" exclaimed Charles, who had been examining the envelope. "I must say, sir, you might allow me to open my own letters."

But the Major was guiltless of any ill faith. The mistake was the butler's. He had inadvertently placed the letter amongst his master's letters, and the Major opened it without glancing at the address.

"What does it signify, do you suppose, whether I opened it or you?" demanded the Major. "Not that I did it intentionally. I should have to know of it: you can't pay this."

"They can wait," said Charles.

"Wait! Do you mean to confess to me that you have had all this wine?" retorted the Major, irascible for once. "Why, you must be growing into—into what I don't care to name!"

"You can't suppose that *I* drank it, sir. The other undergraduates give wine parties, and I have to do the same. They drink the wine; I don't."

"That is, you drink it amongst you," roared the Major; "and a nice disreputable lot you must all be. I understood young men went to college to study; not to drink, and run up bills. What else do you owe? Is this all?"

Charles hesitated in his answer. An untruth he would not tell. The Major saw what the hesitation meant, and it alarmed him. When we become frightened our wrath cools down. The Major dropped into a chair, and lost his fierceness and his voice together.

"Charley," said he in a subdued tone like a whisper, "I have not the money to pay. You know I've not. If it's much, it will ruin me."

"But it is not much, father," returned Charles, his own anger disarmed, and contrition taking its place. "There may be one or two more trifling bills: nothing to speak of."

"What on earth made you run them up?"

"I'm sure I don't know; and I am very sorry for it," said Charles. "These things accumulate in the most extraordinary manner. When you think in your own mind you owe but a few shillings at some place or another, it turns out to be pounds. You have no idea what it is, father!"

"Have I not!" returned the Major significantly. "It is because I have rather too much idea of the insidious way in which debt creeps upon one, that I should like to keep you out of its toils. Charley, my boy, I have been staving off liabilities all my life, and not worried myself in doing it; but it is beginning to tell upon me now. My constitution's changing. I suppose I must be growing fidgety."

"Well, don't let this worry you, father. It's not so much."

"Much or little, it must be paid. I don't want my son to get into bad odour at the University; to have 'debtor' tacked to his name. You are over young for that, Mr. Charles."

Charles remained silent. The Major was evidently in blissful ignorance of the latitude of opinion current amid the Oxonians.

"You go back and dress yourself, Charles; and get your breakfast over; and then, just sit down and make a list of what it is you owe, and I'll see what can be done."

Now in the course of this same morning, it chanced that Frank Raynor took occasion to speak to his uncle about money matters, as connected with his own prospects, which he had not previously entered upon during his present stay. The Major was pacing his study in a gloomy mood when Frank entered.

"You look tired, Uncle Francis. Just as though you had danced all night."

"I leave that to you younger men," returned the Major, drawing his easy chair to the fire. "As to being tired, Frank, I am; though I have not danced."

"Tired of what, uncle?"

"Of everything, I think. Sit down, lad."

"I want to speak to you, Uncle Francis, concerning myself and my plans," said Frank, taking a seat near. "It is time I settled down to something."

"Is it?" was the answer: for the Major's thoughts were elsewhere.

"Why, yes, don't you think it is, sir? The question is, what is it to be? With regard to the bonds for that missing money, uncle? They have not turned up, I conclude?"

"They have not turned up, my boy, or the money either. If they had, you'd have been the first to hear of it."

"What is your true opinion about the money, Uncle Francis?" resumed Frank after a pause. "Will it ever turn up?"

"Yes, Frank, I think it will. I feel fully assured that the money is lying somewhere—and that it will be found sooner or later. I should be sorry to think otherwise; for, as goodness knows, I need it badly enough."

A piece of blazing wood fell off the grate. Frank caught the tongs, and put it up again.

"And I wish it would come to light for your sake also, Frank. You want your share of it, I know."

"Why, you see, Uncle Francis, without money I don't know what to be at. If I were single, I'd engage myself out as assistant to-morrow; but for my wife's sake I wish to take a better position than that."

"Naturally you do, Frank. And so you ought."

"It would be easy enough if I had the money in hand; or if I could with any certainty say when I should have it."

"It's sure to come," said the Major. "Sure."

"Well, I hope so. The difficulty is—when?"

"You must wait a bit longer, my boy. It may turn up any day. To-night, even: to-morrow morning. Never a day passes but I go ferreting into some corner or other of the old house, thinking I may put my hand upon the papers. They are lying in it somewhere, I know, overlooked."

"But I don't see my way clear to wait. Not to wait long. We must have a roof over our heads, and means to keep it up ——"

"Why, you have a roof over your heads," interrupted the Major. "Can't you stay here?"

"I should not like to stay too long," avowed Frank in his candour. "It would be abusing your hospitality."

"Abusing a fiddle-stick!" cried the Major, staring at Frank. "What's come to you? Is the house not large enough?—and plenty to eat in it? I'm sure you may stay here for ever; and the longer you stay the more welcome you'll be. We like to have you."

"Thank you greatly, Uncle Francis."

"Daisy does not want to go away; she's as happy as the day's long," continued the Major. "Just you make yourselves comfortable here, Frank, my boy, until the money turns up and I can hand you over some of it."

"Thank you again, uncle," said Frank, accepting the hospitality in the same free-hearted spirit that it was offered. "For a little while at any rate we will stay with you; but I hope before long to be doing something and to get into a home of my own. I can run up to town from here once or twice a week and be looking out."

"Of course you can."

"Had you been a rich man, Uncle Francis, I would have asked you

to lend me a thousand pounds, or so, to set me up until the nest-egg is found; but I know you have not got it to lend."

"*Got it to lend!*" echoed the Major in a tone of dismayed astonishment. "Why, Frank, my boy, I want such a sum lent to myself. I wish to my heart I knew where to pick it up. Here's Charles must have money now: has come home from Oxford with a pack of debts at his back!"

"Charles has!" exclaimed Frank in surprise.

"And would like to make me believe that all the rest of the young fellows there run up the same bills! every man Jack of 'em! No, no, Master Charley: you don't get me to take in *that*. Young men can be steady at college as well as at home if they choose to be. Charley's just one that's led any way. He is young, you see, Frank: and he is thrown there, I expect, amid a few rich blades to whom money is no object, and must needs do as they do. The result is, he has made I don't know what liabilities, and I must pay. Oh, it's all a worry and bother together!"

Not intentionally, but by chance, Frank, on quitting his uncle, came upon Charles. Looking into a room in search of his wife, there sat Charley at a table, pen and ink and paper before him, setting down his debts, so far as he could judge of and recollect them. Frank went in and closed the door.

"Can I help you in any way, Charley? Uncle Francis has been telling me."

Charles let off a little of his superfluous discomfort in abuse of the people who had presumed to trouble him with the wine bill. Frank sat down, and drew the paper towards him.

"I had no idea it could be as much as that, Frank," was the rueful avowal. "And I wish with all my heart their wine parties and their fast living had been at the bottom of the sea!"

"*Is* it as much, Charley?"

"To tell the truth, I'm afraid it's more," said Charles with candour. "I've only made a guess at the other amounts, and I know I've not put down too much. That tailor is an awful man for sticking it on: as are all the rest of the crew, for the matter of that. I was trying to recollect how many times I've had horses, and traps, and things; and I can't."

"Does Uncle Francis know it comes to all this?"

"No. And I don't care to let him know. Things seem to worry him so much now. I do wish that lost money could be found!"

"Just what your father and I have been wishing," cried Frank. "Look here, Charley. I have a little left out of my five hundred pounds. You shall have the half of it: just between ourselves, you know: and then the sum my uncle must find will not look so formidable to him. Nay, no thanks, lad: would you not all do as much for me—

and more? And we are going to stay on here for a time—and that will save my pocket."

It was simply impossible for Frank Raynor to see a difficulty of this kind, or indeed of any kind, and not help to relieve it if he had help in his power. That he would himself very speedily require the money he was now giving away, was all too probable: but he was content to forget that in Charley's need.

The one individual person in all the house that Charles would have kept from the knowledge of his folly—and in his repentance he did look upon it as folly most extreme—was his mother. He loved her dearly; and he had the grace to be ashamed, for her sake, of what he had done, and to hope that she would never know it. A most fallacious hope, as he was soon to find, for Major Raynor had taken up the news to her with open mouth.

She was sitting on the low sofa in her dressing-room that evening at dusk, when Charles went in. The firelight played on her face, showing its look of utter weariness, and the traces of tears.

"What's the matter, mother?" he asked, sitting down beside her and taking her hand. "Are you ill?"

"Not ill, Charley," she answered. "Only tired and—and out of sorts."

"What has tired you? Last night, I suppose. But you have been resting all day."

"Not last night particularly. So much fast living does not suit me."

"Fast living!" exclaimed Charles in a wondering accent. "Is it the gravies?—or the plum-puddings?"

Mrs. Raynor could not forbear a smile. "I was not thinking of the table, Charles: the gravies and the puddings. We seem to have no rest. It is excitement always, nothing but excitement. We went out last night; we go out to dinner to-morrow night; people come here the next night. Every day that we are at home there's something; if it's not luncheon and afternoon tea, it's dinner; and if it's not dinner, it's supper. I have to think of it all; the entertainments and the dress, and everything; and to go out when you go; and—and I fear it is getting rather too much for me."

"You lie up, mother, for a few days," advised Charles affectionately. "Keep here by your own fire, and turn things over to Alice and the servants. You will soon be all right again."

Mrs. Raynor did not answer. She had Charles's hand now, holding it between both of hers, and was looking steadfastly at the flickering blaze. A silence ensued. Charles lost himself in a train of thought.

"What about this trouble of yours, Charley?"

It was a very unpleasant waking-up for him. Of all things, this was what he had wanted kept from her. His ingenuous face—and it was an ingenuous face in spite of the wine bills—flushed deeply with annoyance.

"It's what you need not have heard about, mother. I came away from Oxford without paying a few pounds I owe there; that's all. There need be no fuss about it."

"I hear of wine bills, and hired horses, and things of that kind. Oh my dear, *need* you have entered into that sort of fast life?"

"Others enter into it," said Charley.

"It is not so much the cost that troubles me," added Mrs. Raynor, in a loving tone; "that can be met somehow. It is ——" she stopped as if seeking for words.

"It is what, mother?"

"Charley, my dear, what I think of is this—that you may be falling into the world's evil ways. It is so easy to do it; you young lads are so inexperienced and confiding; you think all is fair that looks fair; that no poison lurks in what has a specious surface. And oh, my boy, you know that there is a world after this world; and if you were to fall too deeply into the ways of *this*, to get to love it, to be unable to do without it, you might never gain the other. Some young lads that have fallen away from God, have not cared to find Him again; never have found Him."

"There has been no harm," said Charley. "And I assure you I don't often miss chapel."

"Charley, dear, there's a verse in Ecclesiastes that I often think of," she resumed in a low sweet tone. "All mothers think of it, I fancy, when their sons begin to go out in the world."

"In Ecclesiastes?" repeated Charley.

"The verse that Edina illuminated for us once when she was staying at Spring Lawn. It was her doing it, I think, that helped to impress it so much on my memory."

"I remember it, mother mine."

The verse was this:

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

CHAPTER XX.

A TIGER.

THE late spring flowers were blooming; the air was soft and balmy. Easter was that year nearly as late as it could be; in fact, April was drawing to its close; and when Easter comes so late as that, it generally brings with it glowing sunshine.

Eagles' Nest, amid other favoured spots, seemed to be as bright as the day was long. Once more Major Raynor had all his children about him; also Frank and Daisy. For anything that could be seen on the surface, merry hearts reigned universally; none of them seemed to have a care in the world.

Frank decidedly had not. Sanguine and light-hearted, he was content as ever to let the future take care of itself. Yielding to persuasive hospitality, he still stayed on at Eagles' Nest. His wife expected to be laid up in the course of a month or two; and where, asked the Major, could she be better attended to than at Eagles' Nest? Daisy of course wished to stay: she should feel safe, she said, in the care of Mrs. Raynor. Twenty times at least had Frank run up to town to see if he could pick up any news, or hear of any place to suit him, Delusive dreams often presented themselves to his mental vision, of some doctor, rich in years and philanthropy, who might be willing to take him in for nothing to share his first-class practice. As yet the benevolent old gentleman had not been discovered, but Frank quite believed he must exist somewhere.

Another thing had not been discovered: the missing money. But Major Raynor, sanguine as ever was his nephew, did not lose faith in its existence. It would come to light some time he felt certain, and so he never ceased to assure Frank. Embarrassments decidedly increased upon the Major, chiefly arising from the lack of ready cash: for the greater portion of *that* was sure to be forestalled before it came in. Still, a man who enjoys more than two thousand per annum cannot be so badly off: so that on the whole Major Raynor led an easy, indolent, and self-satisfactory life. Had they decreased their home expenses, it would have been all the better: and they might have done that very materially, and yet not touched on home comforts. But neither Major nor Mrs. Raynor knew how to set about retrenchment: and so the senseless profusion went on.

"What is there to see, Charley?"

The questioner was Frank. In crossing the grounds, some little distance from home, he came upon Charles Raynor. Charles was stooping to screw his neck over the corner of a stile by which the high hedge was divided that bordered the large, enclosed, three-cornered tract of grass-land known as the common. On one side of this common were those miserable dwellings, the pigsties: in a line with them ran the row of new skeletons, summarily stopped in erection. Opposite stood some pretty detached cottage-houses, inhabited by a somewhat better class of people; while this high hedge—now budding into summer bloom, and flanked with a sloping bank, rich in moss, and flowering weeds, and wild blossoms—bordered the third side. In one corner, between the hedge and the bettermost houses, flourished a small thick grove of trees. It all belonged to Major Raynor.

"Nothing particular," said Charley, in answer to the question. "I was only looking at a fellow."

Frank sent his eyes ranging over the green space before him. Three or four paths ran along it in different directions. A portion of it was railed off by wooden fencing, and on this some cattle grazed; but on most of it the grass was growing, intended for the mower in a month or two's time. Frank could not see a soul; and said so. Some children, indeed, were playing in front of the huts; but Charles had evidently not alluded to them: his gaze had been directed to the opposite side, near the grove.

"He has disappeared among those trees," said Charles.

"Who was it?" pursued Frank: for there was something in his young cousin's tone and manner suggestive of anxiety, and it awoke his own curiosity.

Charles turned round and put his back against the stile. He had plucked a small green twig from the hedge, and was twirling it about between his lips.

"Frank, I am in a mess.—Keep a look-out yonder, and if you see a stranger, tell me."

"Over-run the constable at Oxford this term, as before?" questioned Frank, leaping to the truth by instinct.

Charles nodded. "And I assure you, Frank," he added, attempting excuse for himself, "that I no more intended to get into debt this last term than I intended to hang myself. When I went down after Christmas, I had formed the best resolutions in the world. I told the mother she might trust me. Nobody could have wished to keep straighter than I wished, and somehow ——"

"You didn't," put in Frank at the pause.

"I have managed to fall into a fast set, and that's the truth," confessed Charles. "And I think the very deuce is in the money. It runs away without your knowing how."

"Well, the tradespeople must wait," said Frank cheerfully; for he was just as genial over this trouble as he would have been over pleasure. "They have to wait pretty stiffly for others."

"The worst of it is, I have accepted a bill or two," cried Charley ruefully. "And—I had a writ served upon me the last day of term."

"Whew!" whistled Frank. "A writ?"

"One. And I expect another. Those horrid bills—there are two of them—were drawn at only a month's date. Of course the time's out; and the fellow wouldn't renew; and—and I expect there'll be the dickens to pay. The amount is not much: each fifty pounds; but I have not the ghost of a shilling to meet it with."

"What do you owe besides?"

"As if I knew! There's the tailor, and the bootmaker, and the livery stableman, and the wine man —— Oh, I can't recollect."

Had Frank possessed the money, in pocket or prospective, he would have handed out help to Charles there and then. But he did not possess it. He was at a nonplus.

"When once a writ's served, they can take you, can't they?" asked Charles, stopping to pluck a pretty pink blossom from the bank, the twig being bitten away to nothing.

"I think so," replied Frank: who had, himself, contrived to steer clear of these unpleasant shoals, and knew no more of their power, or non-power, than Charles did.

"Well, then, I think I am going to be arrested," continued Charles, dropping his voice, and turning round to face the common again. "It's rather a blue look-out. I should not so *much* mind it for myself, I think: better men than I have had to go through the same: but for the fuss there'll be at home."

"The idea of calling yourself a man, Charley! You're but a boy yet."

"By the way, talking of that, Jones of Corpus told me a writ could not be legally served upon me as I was not of age. Jones said he was sure of it. What do you think, Frank?"

"I don't know. But I should suppose that the very fact of the writ having been served upon you is a proof that it can be done, and that Jones of Corpus is wrong. William Stane could tell you: he must have all points of the law at his fingers' ends."

"But I don't care to ask William Stane. May be, they take it for granted that I am of age. Any way, I got served with the writ. And unless I am mistaken," added Charles gloomily, "a fellow has followed me here, and is dodging my heels to arrest me."

"What are your grounds for thinking it, Charley? Have you seen any suspicious person about?"

"Yes, I have. Before you came up just now, I ——"

The words were broken off suddenly. Charles leaped aside from the stile to hide himself behind the hedge. Some individual was emerging from the grove of trees; and he, it was evident, had caused the movement.

"If he turns his steps this way, tell me, Frank, and I'll make a dash homewards through the oak-coppice," came the hurried whisper.

"All right. No. He is making off across the common."

"That may be only a ruse to throw me off my guard," cried Charley from the hedge. "Watch. He will come over here full pelt in a minute. He looks just like a tiger, with that great mass of brown beard. He is a tiger."

Frank, leaning his arms on the stile, scanned the movements of the "Tiger." The Tiger was at some distance, and he could not see him clearly. A thin tiger, of middle height and apparently approaching middle age, dressed in a suit of grey, with a slouching hat on his brows,

and a fine brown beard. But the Tiger, whomsoever he might be, appeared to entertain no hostile intentions for the present moment, and was strolling leisurely in the direction of the huts. Presently Frank spoke.

"He is well away now, Charley: too far to distinguish you, even should he turn round. There's no danger."

Charley came out from the hedge, and took up his former position at the extreme corner of the stile, where he was partially hidden. Every vestige of colour had forsaken his face. He was but young yet: not much more than a boy, as Frank said: and unfamiliar with these things.

"I saw him yesterday for the first time," said he to Frank. "While wondering in a lazy kind of a way who he was and what he wanted here, a great rush of fear came over me. I thought he must be a sheriff's officer. Why the idea should have flashed on me in that sudden way—and the fear—I cannot tell; but it did. I made the best of my way in-doors, and did not stir out again. This morning I said to myself what a simpleton I had been—that I had no grounds for fearing the man, except that he was a stranger; and I came out full of bravery. The first person I saw upon proceeding to cross this stile was he; just in the same spot, close to the trees, where I saw him yesterday; and the rush of fear came over me again.—It's of no good your laughing, Frank: I can't help it: I never was a coward before."

"I was not laughing. Did he see you?"

"No. Neither time, I think. I'm sure he is looking after me. If I were well up in funds, I'd be off somewhere and stay away."

"You could not stay away for ever."

"There's the worst of it. But then, you see, that money may turn up, and put all things straight."

"Well, you may be mistaken in the man, Charley; and I hope you are. Let us go in."

William Stane was at home for these Easter holidays, and still, as heretofore, the shadow of Alice Raynor. It chanced that this same afternoon, they encountered the Tiger—as, from that day, Charles and Frank both called him in private. Strolling along side by side under the brilliant afternoon sun, in that silence which is most eloquent of love, with the birds singing melodiously above them, and the very murmur of the waving trees speaking a sweet language to their hearts, they came upon him, this stranger in grey, sitting on the stump of a tree. The trees, mostly beeches, were thick about there, the path branched off sharply at a right angle, and they did not see him until they were close up. In fact, William Stane had to make a step or two of détour to pass without touching him. Perhaps it was his unexpected appearance in that spot, or that it was not usual to see strangers, or else his peculiar look, with the slouching hat and the bushy

beard; but certain it was, that he especially attracted their attention; somewhat of their curiosity.

"What a strange-looking man!" exclaimed Alice, under her breath, when they had gone some distance. "Did you not think so, William?"

"Queerish. Does he live here? I wonder if he is aware that he is trespassing?"

"Papa lets anyone come on the grounds that likes to," replied Alice. "It's a stranger. I never saw him before."

"Oh, it must be one of the Easter excursionists. Escaped from smoky London to enjoy a day or two of the pure air of the Kentish Wolds."

"As you have done," said she.

"As I have done. I only wish, Alice, I could enjoy it oftener."

The words and the tender tone alike bore a precious meaning to her ear. His eyes met hers, and lingered there.

"I am getting on excellently well," he continued. "By the end of this year, I make no doubt I shall be justified in—in quitting my chambers and taking a house. Perhaps before that."

"Look at that spray of hawthorn!" exclaimed Alice, darting to a hedge they were now passing, for she knew too well what the words implied. "Has it not come out early! It is in full bloom."

"Shall I gather it for you?"

"No. It would be a pity. It looks so well there, and everybody that passes by can enjoy it. Do you know, I never see the flowering hawthorn but I think of that good old Scotch song, 'Ye banks and braes.' I don't know why."

"Let us sit down here," said he, as they came to a rustic seat amid the trees. "And now, Alice, if you would sing that good old song the charm would be perfect."

She laughed. "What charm?"

"The charm of—everything. Of the day and hour, the white and pink may budding in the hedges, of the wild flowers we crush with our feet, of the blue sky and the green trees, of the sunshine and the shade, of the singing birds and the murmuring leaves, and of—you."

Not another word from either of them just yet. William Stane had let his hand fall on hers. Her head was slightly turned from him, her cheeks were blushing, her heart was beating: it was again another interval of that most sweet and eloquent silence. Alice had taken off her hat, which hung by the strings from her arm, and her bright brown hair looked almost golden in the sunlight.

"Won't you begin, Alice? The little birds 'warbling through the flowering thorn' are waiting to hear you. So am I."

And as if she had no power to resist his will, she began at once, without one dissenting murmur, and sang the song to the end. Save

for the birds above them, there were no listeners: no rover was likely to be near that solitary spot. Her voice was sweet, but not loud; every syllable was spoken distinctly. To sit there for ever, and not be disturbed, would be Eden.

"And my false lover stole my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me."

Scarcely had the echoing melody of the last words died away, when the sound of unexpected footsteps was heard approaching, and there advanced into view a woman well known to Alice; one Sarah Croft, the wife of a man who was employed on the estate. They lived in one of those miserable dwellings on the common, but were civil and quiet; somewhat independent in manners, but never joining in the semi-rebellion that reigned. She looked miserably poor. Her blue cotton gown, though clean, was in rags, her old shawl would hardly hang together, the black bonnet on her head might have been used to frighten the crows. She dropped a courtesy and was passing onwards, when Alice inquired after her sick children.

"They be no better, Miss Raynor, thank ye," she answered, halting in front of the bench and standing to face those on it. "The little one, she be took sick now, as well as the two boys. I've got a fine time on't."

"Why don't you have a doctor to them?" said Alice.

"More nor a week agone I went up to the parish and telled 'em I must have a doctor to my children; but he never come till yesterday."

"What did he say?"

"I'll tell ye what he said, Miss Raynor, if ye like. He said doctors and doctors' stuff was o' no good, so long as the houses remained what they was—pes-ti-fe-rus. That was the word, pes-ti-fe-rus. I should not have remembered it, though, but for Jetty's lodger repeating of the very self-same word to me a minute or two agone. I've just passed him. He's a sitting down yonder under the beeches."

Alice, as well as William Stane, instantly recalled the man in grey they had seen sitting there. "Jetty's lodger!" repeated Alice. "What lodger?"

"Some stranger what's a-staying in the place, Miss Raynor. He come into it one morning, a week agone, and took Jetty's rooms. They was to let."

"What is he staying here for?"

"To pry into folks' business, I think," replied the woman. "He's always about, here, there, and everywhere; one can't stir out many yards but one meets him. Saturday last, he walks right into our place without as much as knocking; and there he turns hisself round and about, looking at the rotten floor and the dripping walls, and snifting at the bad smell that's always there, just as if he had as much right inside

as a king. 'Who is your landlord?' says he, 'and does he know what a den this is?' So I told him that our landlord was Major Raynor at Eagles' Nest, and that he did know, but that nothing was done for us. He have gone, I hear, into some o' the other houses as well."

The woman's tone was quite civil, but there could be no doubt that, in her independence, she was talking at Alice as the daughter of Major Raynor.

"As I passed him now he asked me whether my sick children was better—just as you have, Miss Raynor. I told him they was worse. 'And worse they will be, and never better, and all the rest of you too,' says he, 'as long as you inhabit them pes-ti-fe-rus dens!'"

Alice drew her head up in cold disdain, vouchsafing no further word, and feeling very angry at the implied reproach. The woman dropped a slight curtsey and went on her way.

"How insolent they all are!" exclaimed Alice to Mr. Stane. "That Sarah Croft would have been abusive in another moment."

"Their cottages are bad," returned the young man, after a pause. "Could nothing be done, I wonder, to make them a little better?"

"It is papa's business, not mine," remarked Alice in semi-resentment. "And the idea of that strange man presuming to interfere! I wonder what he means by it?"

"He is looking about him by way of filling up his time; which must hang rather monotonously on his hands down here, I presume, away from his books and ledgers," remarked Mr. Stane. "It is the way of the world, Alice; people must interfere in what does not concern them. Nay, just a few moments longer," he said, for she had put her hat on, and was rising to depart. "To-morrow I shall have no such pleasant and peaceful seat to linger in; I shall not have you. How delightful it all is!"

And so, the disturbing interruption forgotten, Alice let fall her hat again, and they sat on in the balmy air, under the blue of the smiling sky, with the green foliage about them springing into life and beauty, type of another Life that must succeed our own winter, and the little songsters overhead worbling their joyous songs. Can none of us, grey now with care and work, and years, remember just such an hour spent in our own sweet spring-time?—when all around spoke to our hearts in one unmixed love-strain of melodious harmony, and the future looked like a charmed scroll that could but bring intense happiness in the unrolling?

"Take my arm, Alice," he said in a half whisper, when they at length rose to return.

She did take it, her face and her heart one hot glow. Took it timidly and with much self-consciousness, never having been in the habit of taking it, or he of offering it. Her hand trembled as it lay within his arm; each might have heard the other's heart beat. And

so in the bliss of this, their first love-dream, they sauntered home through the grounds, choosing pleasant glades and mossy by-ways, and arrived to find Eagles' Nest in a commotion.

Mrs. Frank Raynor had been taken seriously and unexpectedly ill. Doctors were sent for; servants ran about. And William Stane said farewell, and went home from an afternoon that would ever remain as a green spot on his memory. It was his last day of holiday.

With the morning, Daisy lay in great danger. The illness, not expected for a month or two, had come on now. In one sense of the word the event was over, but not the danger; and the baby, not destined to see the light, was gone.

It was perhaps unfortunate that on this same morning, Frank should receive an urgent summons to Trennach. Edina wrote. Her father was very ill; ill, it was feared, unto death; and he most earnestly begged Frank to travel to him with all speed, for he had urgent need of seeing him. Edina said that, unless her father should rally, three or four days were the utmost limit of life accorded to him by the doctors: she therefore begged of Frank to lose no time in obeying the summons; and she added that her father desired her to say the journey should be no cost to him.

"What a distressing thing!" cried Frank, in blank dismay, showing the letter to the Major. "I cannot go. It is impossible that I can go while Daisy lies in this state."

"Good gracious!" said the Major, rubbing his head, as he was sure to do on any emergency. "Well, I suppose you can't, my boy. Poor Hugh!"

"How *can* I! Suppose I were to go, and—and she died?"

"Yes, to be sure. You must wait until she is in less danger. I hope with all my heart Hugh will rally. And Daisy too."

Frank sat down and wrote a few words to his uncle, telling him why he could not start that day, but that he would do so the moment his wife's state allowed it. He wrote more fully, but to the same effect, to Edina. Perhaps on the morrow, he added. The morrow might bring better things.

But on the morrow Daisy was even worse. A high fever had set in. Frank wrote again to Trennach, but he could not leave Eagles' Nest. Some days went on; days of peril: Daisy was hovering between life and death. And on the first day that a very faint indication of improvement was perceptible and the medical men said she might now live, that there was a bare chance of it but no certainty; that same day the final news came from Trennach, and it was too late for Frank to take the journey. Dr. Raynor was dead.

The tidings came by letter from Edina: written to Frank. It was but a short note, just giving a few particulars. Within this note, how-

ever, was a more bulky letter, sealed and marked "Private." Frank chanced to be alone at the moment, and opened it with some curiosity. On a single sheet of enveloping paper, enclosing a letter from Dr. Raynor, were the following lines from Edina :

"My poor father was so anxious to see you, dear Frank, at the last that it disturbed his peace. Of course you could not come, under the circumstances; he saw that; but he said over and over again, and groaned when he said it, that your not coming was most unfortunate, and to you might be disastrous. At the different hours in the day and night when a train was due, nothing could exceed the eagerness with which he looked out for you, and his restlessness when it grew too late to admit hope that you had come. The day before he died when he knew the end was approaching and he should not live to see you, he caused himself to be propped up in bed and had pen and ink brought that he might write to you. He watched me seal up the letter when it was finished, and charged me to send it to you when all was over, but to be sure to enclose it privately, and to tell you to open and read it when you were alone. E. R."

Sending Edina's note of the demise to Major Raynor by a servant, Frank carried these lines and the Doctor's letter to his chamber: thereby obeying injunctions, but nevertheless wondering at them very much. What could his uncle have to say to him necessitating secrecy? Breaking the seal, he ran his eyes over the almost illegible lines, that the dying hand had traced.

"My dear Nephew Frank,—I wanted to see you. I ought not to have put it off so long. But this closing scene has come upon me somewhat suddenly; and now I cannot write all I ought to, and should wish : and I must, of necessity, write abruptly.

"*Are you conscious of being in any danger?* Have you committed any act that could bring you under the arm of the law? If so, take care of yourself. A dreadful rumour was whispered in my ears by Andrew Float, connecting you with the hitherto unexplained fate of Bell the miner. I charged Float to be silent—and I think he will be, for he is a kind and good man, and only spoke to me that I might put you on your guard—and I questioned Blase Pellet, from whom Float had heard it. Pellet was sullen, obstinate, would not say much; but he did say he could hang you, and *would* do it if you offended him or put yourself in his way. I could not get anything more from him, and it was not a subject that I cared to minutely inquire into, or could pursue openly.

"My boy, you know best what grounds there may be for this half-breathed accusation, whether any or none. I have hardly had a minute's

peace since it reached me, now three weeks ago: in fact, it has, I believe, brought on the crisis with me somewhat before it would otherwise have come. At one moment I say to myself it is a malicious invention, an infamous lie, I know my boy Frank too well to believe this, or anything else against him: the next moment I shudder at the tale and at the possibility of what may have been enacted. Perhaps through passion—or accident—or—I grow confused: I know not what I would say.

"Oh my boy, my nephew, my dear brother Henry's only child! my heart is aching with dismay and doubt. I do believe you are innocent of all intention to harm; but—my sight is growing dim. *Take care of yourself.* Hide yourself if need be (and you best know whether there be need, or not) from Blase Pellet. It is he who would be your enemy. I see it; and Andrew Float sees it; though we know not why or wherefore. In any obscure nook of this wide world, shelter yourself from him. If he does indeed hold power in his hand, it may be your only chance of safety. I can write no more. God bless and help you! Farewell. Your loving and anxious Uncle Hugh."

Frank Raynor may have drawn many a deep breath in his life, but never so deep a one as he drew now. Mechanically he folded the letter, and placed it in an inner pocket.

"Are you there, sir?"

The question came from outside the door, in the voice of one of the servants. Frank opened it.

"Lunch is on the table, sir."

"Is it?" returned Frank, half bewildered. "I—I don't want any to-day, James. Just say so. I am going out for a stroll."

The letters from Cornwall were never delivered at Eagles' Nest until the mid-day post. Frank took his hat, and went out; bending his steps whithersoever they chose to take him, so that he might be alone.

Strolling on mechanically, in deep thought, he plunged into a dark coppice, and asked himself what he was to do. The letter had disturbed him in no common degree. It had taken all his spirit, all his elasticity out of him: and that was saying a great deal of Frank Raynor.

"I wish I could hang Blase Pellet!" he burst forth in his torment and perplexity. "He deserves it richly. To disturb my poor uncle with his malicious tongue! Sneak!"

But Frank was unconsciously unjust. It was not Dr. Raynor that Blase Pellet had disturbed. To do Blase justice, he was vexed that the Doctor should have heard it, for he held him in great respect and would not willingly have grieved him. In an evil moment, when Blase had taken rather more to drink than was quite necessary—a very rare occurrence with him, almost unprecedented—he had dropped the dangerous words to Andrew Float.

"Yes, I must hide myself from him, as my uncle says," resumed Frank, referring to the advice in the letter "He could be a dangerous enemy. For my own sake; for—everybody's sake, I must keep myself where he cannot find me."

Emerging from the coppice to the open ground, Frank lifted his eyes, and saw, standing near him, the man in grey, whom they had christened the Tiger. He was leaning against the tree with bent head and folded arms, apparently in deep thought. All in a moment, just as a personal fear of him had rushed over Charles, so did it now rush over Frank. His brain grew dizzy.

For the notion somehow struck him that the man was not wanting Charles at all. But that he might be an emissary of Blase Pellet's, come here to look after himself.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT JETTY'S.

JOHN JETTY was the local carpenter. A master in a small way. His workshop was in the village, Grassmere, hard by Eagles' Nest; his dwelling-house was on the common, already told of. In this house he lived with his sister, Esther Jetty; a staid woman, more than ten years older than himself: he being a smart, talkative, active, and very intelligent man of two or three-and-thirty. The house, which they rented of Major Raynor, was larger than they required, and Esther Jetty was in the habit of letting a sitting and bed room in it when she could find a desirable lodger to occupy them.

On the Thursday in Passion Week, when she was in the midst of her house-cleaning for Easter, and in the act of polishing the outside of the spare sitting-room window, in which hung a card with "Lodgings" written on it, she noticed a man in grey clothes; who was sauntering up from the direction of the railway station, an over-coat on his arm, and a good-sized black bag in his hand.

"Some traveller from London," decided Esther Jetty, turning round to gaze at him; for a stranger in the quiet place was quite an event. "Come down here to spend Easter."

The thought had scarcely passed her mind, when, somewhat to her surprise, the stranger turned aside from the path, walked direct towards her, and took off his hat while he spoke.

"Have you lodgings to let?" he asked. "I see a card in your window."

"Yes, sir, I have; two rooms," said she respectfully, for the courtesy of lifting his hat had favourably impressed her, and the tones of his voice were courteous also, not at all like those of an individual in

humble station. "What a fine beard!" she thought to herself. "How smooth, and curly and silky it is!"

"I want to stay in this place for a few days," continued he, "and am looking for lodgings. Perhaps yours would suit me."

Esther Jetty hastened to show the rooms. They were clean, comfortable, and prettily furnished: and the rent was ten shillings per week.

"It's not too much, sir, at this season of the year when the summer's coming on," she hastened to say, lest the amount should be objected to. "I always try to make my lodgers comfortable, and cook for them and wait on them well. The last I had—a sick young woman and her little girl—stayed here all the winter and spring: they only left three weeks ago."

The stranger's answer was to put down a sovereign. "That's the first week's rent in advance," said he. "With the change you can get in a couple of mutton chops for my dinner. I shall not give you much trouble." And he took possession of the rooms at once.

As the days had gone on, only a few as yet, Esther Jetty found that his promise of not giving much trouble was true. She had never had a lodger who gave less. He lived very simply. His dinner generally consisted of two mutton chops; his other food chiefly of eggs and bread-and-butter. It was glorious weather; and he passed nearly all his time out of doors.

Not a nook or corner of the immediate neighbourhood escaped his keen eye, his (as it seemed) insatiable inquisitiveness. He penetrated to the small dwelling houses, good and bad, asking questions of the inmates, making friends with them. He would stand by the half-hour together side by side with the out-door labourers, saying the land wanted this and that done to it, and demanding why it was not done. But, there could be no doubt that he was even more curious in regard to the Raynor family, and especially to its eldest son, than he was as to the land and its labourers: and the latter soon noticed that if by chance Charles Raynor came into sight, the stranger would stroll off, apparently without aim, towards him; and when Charles turned away, as he invariably did, the man followed in his wake at a distance. In short, it would seem that his chief business was to look in a surreptitious way after some of the inmates of Eagles' Nest; and that his visitings of the land and the cottages, and his consequent disparaging remarks thereupon, were probably but taken up to pass away the time. This opinion, however, grew upon people later, not at first.

Easter week passed. On the following Sunday, the stranger went to church, and took up a place whence he had full view of the large square pew belonging to Eagles' Nest. On Easter Sunday he had sat at the back of the church, out of sight. Major Raynor, Charles, Alice, and Frank were in the pew to-day, with the governess and little Kate: Mrs. Raynor was at home with Frank's wife, then lying in her

dangerous illness. This was two days before they received news of Dr. Raynor's death. Charles was rendered miserably uncomfortable during the service by the presence of the Tiger opposite to him—as might be read by anyone in the secret of his fears, and was read by Frank. Never did Charles raise his eyes but he saw those of the Tiger fixed on him: in fact, the Tiger studied the faces in Major Raynor's pew more attentively than he studied his book.

"He is taking toll of me—that he may know me again: I don't suppose he did know me before, or his work would have been done," thought Charles. "What a precious idiot I was to come to church! Thank heaven, he can't touch me on a Sunday." And when the service was over, the Tiger coolly stood in the churchyard and watched the family pass him, looking keenly at Charles.

That same evening, John Jetty found himself invited to take a pipe with his lodger. They sat in the arbour in the back garden, amid the herbs, the spring cabbages, and the early flowers. Jetty never wanted any inducement to talk. He was not of a wary nature by any means, and did not observe how skilfully and easily the thread of his discourse was this evening turned on the Raynors and their affairs. No man in the place could have supplied more correct information to a stranger than he. He was often at work in the house, was particularly intimate with Lamb, the butler, who had lived with Mrs. Atkinson; as had two or three of the other head servants; and they had the family politics at their fingers' ends. Mrs. Raynor had brought one servant from Spring Lawn; the nurse; the woman knew all about her branch of the family, Frank included, and had no objection to relate news for the new people's benefit, who in their turn repeated it to Jetty. Consequently Jetty was as much at home in the family archives as the Raynors were themselves.

"Is the estate entailed on the Major's son?" questioned the Tiger, in a pause of the conversation.

"I don't think it's strictly entailed on him, sir, but of course he'll have it," was Jetty's answer. "Indeed, it is no secret that the Major has made a will and left it to him. Mrs. Atkinson bequeathed it entirely to the Major: she didn't entail it."

"Who is Mrs. Atkinson?" asked the Tiger.

"Why, that was the possessor of the estate before him," cried Jetty, in an accent full of surprise. To him, familiar with Eagles' Nest and its people for many years, it sounded strange to hear anybody ask who Mrs. Atkinson was. "She was an old lady, sir, sister to the Major, and it all belonged to her. He only came into it last year when she died."

"Had she no sons?"

"No, sir; not any. I never heard that she did have any. Her husband was a banker in London; he bought this place a good many years ago. After his death Mrs. Atkinson quite lived in it."

"Then—it is sure to come to the Major's eldest son?"

"As sure as sure can be," affirmed Jetty, replenishing his pipe at his lodger's invitation. "The Major would not be likely to will it away to anybody else."

"I saw two young men in the pew to-day: one quite young, scarcely out of his teens, I should say; the other some years older. Which of them was the son?"

"Oh, the youngest. The other is a nephew; Mr. Frank Raynor. He is very good-looking, he is: such a pleasant face, with nice blue eyes and bright hair. Not but what Mr. Charles is good-looking, too, in a different way."

"Mr. Charles looks to me like a bit of a puppy," freely commented the Tiger. "And has a haughty air with it: as though he were king of the country and all the rest of us his subjects."

"Well, he is a bit haughty sometimes," acknowledged the carpenter. "Folks have found him so. He is just home from Oxford, sir, and I fancy he has been spending pretty freely there: Lamb just said a word to me. But if you want pleasant speaking and cordial manners, you must go to the nephew, Mr. Frank."

"What is *he* doing here?" dryly asked the stranger, after a pause.

"He is a doctor, sir."

"A doctor? Is he in practice here?"

"Oh, no. He is waiting to set-up in London, and staying down here till he does it."

"What is he waiting for?"

"Well, sir, for money, I guess. The Raynors are open people and don't scruple to talk of things before their servants, so that there's not much but what's known. When the late Mrs. Atkinson died, a good deal of stir arose about some money of hers that could not be found: thousands and thousands of pounds, it was said. It could neither be found, nor the papers relating to it."

"Is it not found?" asked the Tiger, stroking his silky beard.

"Not yet. The Major is anxiously waiting for it: not a day passes, Lamb says, but he is sure to remark that it may turn up the next. Mr. Frank Raynor is to have some of this money to set him up in practice."

"Did Mrs. Atkinson leave no money to him?—He must have been a relation of hers?"

"Oh yes, she left money to him. I forget what it was now—a good sum, though."

"Why does he not set-up with that?" questioned the Tiger wonderingly.

"He has spent it, sir. He and his young wife went abroad, and lived away, I suppose. Any way, the money's gone, Lamb says. But Mr. Frank's as nice a fellow as ever lived."

"Did he—" began the stranger, and then broke off suddenly, as if in doubt whether or not to put the question: but in a moment went on firmly. "Did he ever live at Trennach in Cornwall?"

"Trennach? Yes, sir, I think that's where he did live. Yes, I'm sure that is the name. He was in practice there with another uncle, one Dr. Raynor, and might have stopped there and come into the practice after him. A rare good opening for him, it's said: but he preferred to come elsewhere."

"Preferred to travel and see the world," spoke the stranger cynically. "Are Major Raynor's revenues good ones?"

"Well, sir, I know in Mrs. Atkinson's time this estate was said to bring in a clear two thousand a year. And Major Raynor had of course an income before he came into it: but that, I hear, is only an annuity and goes from him at his death."

"Then, if his revenues amount to that—from two to three thousand a year—how is it that he does not do the repairs necessary on the estate, and keep up the land, and help to ameliorate the condition of the wretched serfs about him?" demanded the stranger, staring at Jetty.

Jetty shook his head. "I don't think it is the will that's wanted," replied he. "The Major seems to be thoroughly good-hearted: and Lamb says he is one of the easiest masters he could ever wish to serve. No, it is not the will, sir, that is wanting."

"What is it then? The money?"

Jetty nodded his head in the affirmative. "They live at such a rate, you see: and it's said the Major had a lot of back debts to pay when he came here. Altogether, he has nothing to spare."

"Then he ought to have," asserted the Tiger, tapping thoughtfully at his pipe, that lay on the table. "This young Frank Raynor's wife, who is lying ill: had she no money?"

"No, sir. Her family have plenty, I expect, for they live at some grand place down in Cornwall. But she has none. It was a runaway match that she and Mr. Frank made, so she couldn't expect any."

The Tiger nodded his head two or three times, as if in self-commune. "I see," said he: "these Raynors are an improvident set altogether. Thoughtless, cruel, selfish, upstart, and purse-proud. From what little I have noticed during the few days I have been here, and from what I hear you say, that is the impression they make upon me."

He took his pipe off the table as he spoke, knocked the ashes out of it, and put it in its case. An intimation, John Jetty thought, that their social hour was at an end: and he went away, respectfully wishing good evening to his lodger.

Easter was over; and the time for going back to Oxford for the coming term was past. Charles Raynor had not gone to keep it. He had to confess to the Major that he did not care to go back without a good sum of

money, apart from his allowance; he might have said dared not go. It was not convenient to find the sum: so the Major decided that Charles must miss that one term, and keep the next.

The weeks went on. Charles had in a degree got over his dread of the Tiger—who still remained on in his lodgings—for it was now very evident that if that mysterious man's mission at Grassmere were to take him into custody for debt, it might have been accomplished long ere this. Nevertheless, so strongly do first impressions retain their hold upon us, his dislike of the man continued in all its force. But, as Charles's alarm subsided, Frank's increased. The more evident it became that Charles was not the Tiger's object, the more surely did it seem to him that he, himself, was. It was a fear he could not speak of, but his secret uneasiness was great. Neither he nor Frank could pretend to disguise from themselves that the man's daily business did appear to be that of watching the movements of the Raynor family, especially those of the two young men. Not of watching offensively, but in a quiet, easy, unobtrusive manner. Frank fully believed that the man was a secret emissary of Blase Pellet's, watching that he did not escape.

Major Raynor had never noticed this man: and Frank and Charles, each for his own private and individual reasons, had refrained from speaking of him. Of late the Major had chiefly confined himself to the gardens immediately attached to his house, not going beyond them. There were two reasons for this: the one was, that he had now grown so very stout as to render walking a trouble to him; the other was, that he never went beyond his inner fence but he was sure to meet one, or other, or more, of those wretched malcontents; who thought nothing of accosting him and asking him to do this, and to do that. So matters remained pretty stationary: the Major indolently nursing himself in his easy-chair on the lawn; the young men enjoying their private discomforts; and the Tiger peering into every conceivable spot open to him, and making himself better acquainted with the general shortcomings of the Raynors, in regard to the estate and the people on it, than they themselves were.

It was Saturday evening. Alice sat at the piano in the drawing-room, singing songs by twilight, to the intense gratification of William Stane, who stood over her. The young barrister frequently ran down home the last day in the week, to remain over the Sunday with his family. As a matter of course, he spent a great deal of the interlude at Eagles' Nest. The Major sat back in the room, dozing; Charles was listlessly turning over a lot of music. Eagles' Nest had given an afternoon-party that day; a fashionable kettledrum; but the guests had departed after the early tea.

"I can scarcely see," said Alice, as her lover placed a new song before her. She was in the dress she had worn at the entertainment: a

black gauze trimmed with white ribbons, with silver bracelets and other ornaments, and looked charmingly lovely. They were in mourning for Dr. Raynor.

"I'll ring for the lights," said Charles. "I can't see."

The speaking had aroused the Major. "We don't want lights yet," said he. "It is pleasanter as it is."

"Sing the songs you know by heart," whispered William Stane "After all, they are the best and sweetest."

Presently Lamb came in of his own accord with the wax lights. The Major, waking up again, made no objection now, but forbade the shutters to be closed.

"It's a pity to shut out that moonlight," said he. Not that the moonlight could have benefited him much, for in another minute he was asleep again. He had grown strangely drowsy of late. So the room was lighted up, and the moonlight streamed in at the window.

Frank entered. He had been sitting upstairs with his wife, who was still very ill. Taking up his position at the window, he listened silently to the song then in progress. Charles came up to him.

"How is she to-night, Frank?"

"No better. If—Look there!" he suddenly exclaimed, his voice sunk to a whisper.

Some one had walked deliberately by, outside the window, gazing at what there might be to see within the room. Was it the Tiger? Frank's heart beat nineteen to the dozen.

"Did you see him, Charley?"

"Who was it?" whispered Charley.

"I'm hardly sure; he passed so quickly. The Tiger, I conclude. Yes, I am sure of it. I know the cut of his head."

"What consummate impudence, to be tresspassing here!"

Both of them left the room, made their way to a side door, and looked out. No one was in sight: and yet, whoever had passed must have come that way.

"He has turned back," said Charley: and he advanced cautiously amid the shrubs, that skirted that end of the house, to look round at the front.

No. Not a soul was to be seen or heard. Had he scampered straight across the lawn and made off? It seemed like it.

"I wonder what it's coming to!" cried Charley. "Could we have him warned off the estate, I wonder?"

"Hardly," spoke Frank in a dreamy tone.

"I *cannot* think what he does here," exclaimed Charles. "If he had any evil intentions, he—he would have acted upon them before now."

"You mean as to yourself, Charley. Rely upon it, you are out of the matter altogether."

"Who's in it, then?

"Myself, perhaps."

The answer was given quietly and easily: but there was something in its tone that kept Charles from regarding it as a jest.

"*You* are not in debt, are you, Frank?" he cried hastily.

"Not that I know of."

"I declare, for the moment I thought you must be in earnest," said Charles, relieved. "It is uncommonly strange what the fellow can want here?"

Frank said no more. They paced about for some time, without their hats, in the bright moonlight, talking of other matters. In crossing the side path to the house, they met Jetty the carpenter coming away from it, a frail in his hand, out of which a saw was sticking upright. The man had been doing some repairs in-doors.

"Jetty," cried Charles, accosting him, and speaking upon impulse, "who is that man that lodges with you? The fellow with the great brown beard, who goes about in a suit of grey."

"I don't know who he is, sir," replied Jetty. "He is a very quiet lodger and pays regular."

"What is he down here for?"

"Well, I think it is for his health," said Jetty. "He told us he had not been well for some time before he came to Grassmere."

"What is his name?"

"And that I don't know, sir ——"

"Not know his name?" interrupted Charles, impatiently.

"Well, sir, I was going to say that I don't know it from him. He is uncommonly close as to his own affairs: though he likes well enough to hear about other people's. As to his name he did not mention it when he first came in, and my sister said she did not like to ask him. But ——"

"I never heard of such a thing as not knowing a lodger's name," went on Charles, getting excited over it, while Frank stood by in perfect silence. "Does the man get no letters?"

"Yes, sir. But they don't come to the house; they are left at the post office in Grassmere, and he fetches them himself. The other morning, when Esther went into his parlour, he was reading one of these letters, and the cover of it lay on the table, address upwards. She was not quick enough to read the name on it, for he took it up, but she saw it was a short name and began with a G."

"Mr. Grim, no doubt," said Charles.

"'Mr. G——, Post Office, Grassmere.' That was it, sir."

"I must say I should like to know who he is and what he is doing here," concluded Charles. "Good-night, Jetty."

Jetty gave an answering good-night, touched his cap, and went away with rapid strides. Drawing near to his home, he overtook the Tiger, sauntering along with slow steps.

"You are late to-night, Jetty."

"Yes, sir," replied the carpenter, decreasing his pace to that of the speaker. "I had to put some new shelves into one of the kitchen cupboards at Eagles' Nest, and it has taken me longer than I thought for."

"All going on well there?" continued the Tiger.

"First rate," said Jetty. "They had a great party this afternoon; one of those new-fashioned kettledrums. Such an entertainment it was! Such beautiful dresses!"

"I thought the son, Charles Raynor, was keeping his terms at Oxford," resumed the Tiger, after giving himself time to digest the information touching the kettledrum. "Why is he not keeping this one?"

"Well, sir," said Jetty, beginning his answer in his favourite mode, and dropping his voice to a low key, though they were quite alone on the common, "I believe Mr. Charles can't show his face at Oxford until he is better up in funds; so he is omitting this term."

"Debts—eh?" cried the Tiger, but without any appearance of surprise. "And the Major has not the funds to spare?"

"Well, sir, that is to be inferred."

"Meanwhile the lad fills up his days and hours at home with dancing, and smoking, and kettledrums, and other good-for-nothing amusements. *That's* a nice way to spend one's life!"

"Young men will be young men, sir—though they are but lads," spoke Jetty, deprecatingly.

"Yes; young men will be young men: some of them at any rate," came the half-mocking retort. "But in all my days, I never saw a young man who appeared more likely to go straight down to ruin than Charles Raynor."

(*To be continued.*)

PRINCESS ELEANOR.

XIII.

FLORENCE, January, 186—.

HOW surprised you will be, Amy, when, running over this letter your eye meets names I had thought to leave behind me at home—Werdan, Arsent. Both have been here for more than a fortnight, and both are here for the sake of your unworthy friend.

My not narrating to you more of the first week I passed in this city, must be solely ascribed to the arrival of these gentlemen, who so persecute us with invitations for picnics and rides into the country, that Ernest has been obliged to assign two days in every week to each of them, on which they may play the maître des plaisirs, and do with us what they like. They have brought a young man with them, the son of a friend of my mother's, who also takes part in our amusements. Let me present him to you: Scipione di San Giuliano.

Cousin Dorothy was quite in an ecstacy of joy when the two friends from home paid their first visit. They were scarcely gone when she settled herself comfortably by the fire, and began talking.

"How delightful of them to follow us in this way!" cried she. "It is for you I am especially glad, Eleanor. You will be no longer obliged to look for company to the artist alone, and can talk of things more pleasant and natural to you than that everlasting discourse on art. I do not mean to say that he is not a very nice young man indeed, but he is sorely in need of a final polish. I will see what I can do for him."

If my dear cousin would only be a little more frank, and openly confess that she now hopes to have the young artist all to herself, and that the others will be constantly at my side!

That was my first thought. But after more reflection on the subject, I felt that she was not so very far wrong after all.

That I have accustomed myself to a new tone of conversation, and also to new society, I see by the effort it now costs me to listen to the talk of Werdan and Arsent.

I am no longer ready to answer every clever remark, and even forget to ask for the small chronicles of our town, which must offer some novelties since our departure. So I have come to the conclusion that I have occupied myself more with art than was good for me. Once so far in my reflection, I began to think of an excursion planned for the next day with less reluctance than I had done until then. I went, and

cousin Dorothy came too, drawing after her him she kindly intended "polishing."

But when we were home again I could not help comparing the day at its close with the one I spent with Herr Impach in the Alps. Of course you think that the first did not gain by the comparison.

The young man seems to have felt slighted—I did not speak two words to him all day—for he has asked Ernest if it would please him to have a copy of Titian's Biondo.

This is more than I had intended. I did not mean to give up our walks through the picture galleries, and shall with difficulty spare him. Still, as the chance is offered me, I will try and return to my old ways again.

When I shall have told you in a few words how we passed this evening, then you will be quite au fait.

We had returned from a small theatre, and Ernest asked the gentlemen who accompanied us to come in and take tea with us. The night had been so beautiful and clear that we had walked home; a thing *our* climate would not admit of in the month of February. But it was cold enough even here to admit of our greatly enjoying the sight of a large fire by which cousin Dorothy sat, making tea and awaiting our return. When Herr Impach entered the room we were all comfortably settled; Arsent with cousin Dorothy on the sofa, Werdan and the young Florentine to my right and left. Herr Impach went and sat down by Ernest near the fire, and quite overlooked the bewitching smile with which cousin Dorothy meant to lure him to her side.

Our conversation soon turned on art treasures, in which Florence is so exceedingly rich. Only a few days ago I should have spoken enthusiastically on that subject: now, to my shame be it confessed, I sought out the only thing that had displeased me.

"In one point I have been sorely disappointed," I exclaimed; "and half my pleasure has been spoilt. It is in Raphael's Fornarina!"

My words were intended to provoke the young artist; if I am not to desert his banner, he must convince me that his cause is perfect and blameless. Fearing that he should misunderstand me, I accompanied my remark by a look in his direction.

The Florentine, San Giuliano, took up the gauntlet, however. He said that I must have forgotten what the word Fornarina means. "'Tis not a princess"—here he bowed low—"'tis not a princess we look for in Raphael's love: and for a simple baker girl she is well enough. The figure is a little clumsy, the hand large; but we discover nothing vulgar in the face."

After a moment's reflection, I said:

"Not what is comparatively beautiful—no, the best and highest must gain the artist's heart. Why should Raphael have *painted* his Madonna, and *loved* the Fornarina? I can never forgive him for that,

and would rather a thousand times I had not seen the picture in the Tribuna, than have the ideal I had conceived of this genius dimmed by a single shadow."

"Perhaps the girl was the prettiest Raphael had ever seen," Ernest said; "only he painted her as she was, while he idealised the other female heads in his pictures. Of course I only speak en dilettante, and do not presume to give an opinion on the subject."

My brother turned to Herr Impach as he spoke these last words; but the artist did not yet choose to tell us his mind, and allowed Arsent to reply.

"I am of Princess Eleanor's opinion. With her I think that a coarse beauty cannot compete with a refined though less handsome being. The first only delights the eye, the second the mind also, even if we speak of the exterior alone."

"That is a matter of taste," said Werdan. "Le juste milieu is what I like best."

"My compliments to the one who fears to offend either side!" I answered. But as I had made up my mind to force open Herr Impach's mouth, I continued:

"The greatest of his century must have had the choice amongst the loveliest women of his time. Why then should he have chosen a being we cannot call beautiful, and before whose portrait we stand from no other reason than because we are told it is Raphael's Fornarina?"

"It is not Raphael's Fornarina," the young artist at last condescended to say. "No document, not even a tradition, speaks to the fact, whilst a thousand indications point us to the real original."

"And which is that?" we all asked at the same moment.

"The Madonna della Seggiola. We find her head reproduced in ten pictures. 'Tis always the same maiden, who, with loving looks bestowed on the spectator, pleases us so much. All that history and tradition reveal points to the fact that she was indeed the beautiful Trasteverina."

"You believe with me," I asked, "that Raphael never loved the woman commonly called the Fornarina?"

"I am sure of it. A true artist, a genius, who meets the woman of his dreams, must by her be inspired to his best work. Wherever Raphael wished to represent beauty as something sacred, there he painted his Fornara's beloved face. She was all in all to him, as he said to Leo X., who, on asking him why the girl was always at his heels when he painted, received the answer: 'If you take away my Fornarina, you take away my eyes.'"

The artist defended his cause as if he felt that I had attacked him much more than poor, stout Fornarina. Ernest nodded his head approvingly when he had done speaking, and I should have liked to

say something in acquiescence, but Werdan had already involved me in a long story, the end of which San Giuliano scarcely awaited to tell a whole string of anecdotes, from laughing at which the tears came to his eyes.

I was aware of all that passed around me; saw cousin Dorothy giggling behind her pocket-handkerchief, and heard her ask for every clever thing to be repeated twice. Werdan never ceased talking; even Arsent sometimes chimed in; and I—Amy, *I* scarcely succeeded in giving my face an attentive expression. The first part of the conversation had interested me deeply, and now I was so bored that I felt the greatest desire in the world to gather up the train of my dress, and sit down on the low stool between my brother and Herr Impach. There I should have heard more of the history of Raphael Sanzio and his beautiful Fornarina.

But I was obliged to remain the whole evening in the society I had thought worthy of preference, and felt severely punished for my mischievousness in challenging the artist.

Perhaps this is only the transition to old habits and the old tone of conversation. At any rate, I will persevere in trying to get back to it again.

Cousin Dorothy told me, with a deep sigh, that she gave the young artist up as incorrigible. Dear, good cousin! It would require a stronger persuasive power than yours to win this young man from his all-absorbing thoughts—from his art!

From what lofty heights he looks down upon us, when our jeunesse dorée are chattering away about all the nonsense that enters their heads! But that is very wrong and presuming of him, for no one has a right to despise what he could not succeed in doing; and I really do not believe that he could talk a whole evening about nothing at all, as Werdan can.

Do you know he is very proud too, Amy? As we parted on the stairs he made a bow to me lower than any ever made by our dancing-master; and he did not even look at me once the whole time.

To-morrow I shall ask Ernest to take me through Pitti Palace; I must look at the real Fornarina again. Besides, I am curious to see how far advanced Herr Impach is with his picture.

Good night, Amy! I am so tired that the pen drops from my hand.

Your ELEANOR.

XIV.

COUNT WERDAN TO HIS UNCLE.

FLORENCE.

I have been here for more than three weeks, according to your wish, dear uncle; and I suppose you have expected a letter from me long ere this.

I was greatly astonished to find Arsent here before me. He persecutes Eleanor in the most absurd manner, and what is worse, evidently with the approval of Ernest. Very little I care, however, for notwithstanding his enormous fortune, he is in every respect my inferior, and it amuses me greatly to let him appear as such on every possible occasion. His conversation about horses and stables makes Eleanor so nervous that she turns shudderingly from him to me. A part of this I owe to the dauber Impach, who with his romantic talk about art has quite upset her. Serves that stupid Arsent right! Why does he sneak after Eleanor in this way, without giving me notice of his intentions by one single word?

But when I called Impach "dauber," I did him wrong, upon my word! He certainly is the cleverest fellow at copying ancient pictures that I ever saw in my life. Of course I have not your eye, dear uncle, in questions of art, but I must confess that *I* could not distinguish from the original a copy he made of a Titian. I will just tell you, dear uncle, what idea struck me when I saw that excellent picture! Supposing you were not quite so determined upon having the original, how delighted you might be with an Impach copy of your beloved Rembrandt—a copy which would be by everyone mistaken for the original! If you would so content yourself, then I should have succeeded in all—for Eleanor I look upon as entirely mine. She certainly flirts a little with Arsent, and even with the painter, but that is only to test my love. Besides, I am without a rival, for she cannot bear Arsent, and of the artist there can be no question. I should risk the decisive words any day if it were not for the Prince, with his resolve to make Eleanor marry a rich man. These difficulties can, however, be completely put aside by my dear good uncle.

That idea of a copy of the Rembrandt does not in the least affect the diplomacy with which I still hope to obtain the original. Should I fail, however, I cannot believe that you, dear uncle, would be cruel enough to stand in my way, when I am about to become the happiest of mortals.

Be content for to-day with this short, unstudied letter. You know that I always managed my gun better than my pen.

Your dutiful Nephew,

OSCAR.

XV.

FLORENCE.

I took up my pen, Geoffrey, to fill your ear with lamentations over my misery; but I remember in time that I have no right to do so, as it is all my own fault.

But just in contrast with the happy day I reported in my last, I will describe our present evenings; and before all, the one from which I date all my wretchedness.

When theatres and parties are over, we pass the second half of the

evening en famille, that is to say, with Count Werdan, Arsent, and a young Florentine, brought here expressly, I doubt not, to set Werdan off. It is the Prince who excludes everyone else, in the hope, I imagine, of seeing his sister decide in favour of young Arsent. From him I had as yet nothing to fear, for he looked as innocent and foolish as possible.

It was Werdan I thought dangerous. Well, one evening they all began talking of ghosts and spirits. The Florentine told us that a few days ago Veronica Cibo had again been seen in the vaults of Villa Salviati.

"Explain your meaning," cried Werdan. "If this Veronica Cibo is the owner of Villa Salviati, I see nothing extraordinary in her visiting the cellars of her house. I am quite ready even to keep her company, if her wine be better than her renommée."

For a few moments the Florentine enjoyed the delight in silence of being in possession of a story about which even the brilliant Werdan knew nothing. At last he began :

"Veronica Cibo was the wife of Gino Salviati. No longer so beautiful as she had once been ——"

"*When* was she no longer as beautiful as she had once been?" interrupted Werdan.

This call to logic remained unheeded by the Florentine. Undisturbed he continued :

"Veronica Cibo one day found out that her husband was faithless to her, and all for a little beauty belonging to the lower classes. She took her resolve, and one night entered the happy one's bedchamber by the window, found her sleeping, and in a moment cut her beautiful head off, which she carried away with her in a cloth. Next morning—it was her husband's birthday—she brought him an elegant basket, the contents of which were concealed with flowers and veils. Gino Salviati looked gratefully at her, and raised the lid, beneath which he discovered his murdered love's pale face, surrounded by a crown of golden hair. He took his wife to the Villa Salviati, where she is said not to have died, but to be still wandering about, much to the dismay of the servants and country-folks."

"Your statement," remarked Werdan, "leaves nothing to be desired in the way of precision and brevity. Whether it could not have been told in a more interesting and poetic manner, I leave others to decide. Now I should have told it thus :—In times when ——"

"Pray why did you not tell the story at once?" interrupted the Florentine.

"Because I did not know it, and that is simply owing to my not having had the pleasure of being born in Tuscany, the land of terrible traditions. Still I am certain that I should have obtained a greater success had I told the story."

"I should have left the whole thing unsaid," Arsent here interposed. "Did none of you remark the shudders it has cost Princess Eleanor?"

"All romantic ladies love horrible stories!" said Werdan, in his own defence.

"Who says that my sister is romantic?" asked the Prince.

"Princess Eleanor started the subject of esprits," answered Werdan.

"No! I did that," the Florentine protested.

"Did you, really?" Arsent asked with a meaning smile.

Werdan could not resist explaining that smile. He said: "You forget, Arsent, that our friend was speaking of esprits in the plural, and not in the singular."

"I find that I am being discussed as if I were not present," Eleanor now said. "If I did not really believe, my dear Werdan, that you would add all manner of nonsense to the story in question, I should make you tell it, even at the cost of ever so many shudders, which Arsent is generous enough to wish to spare me."

The gentlemen now outdid each other in telling Eleanor all the sweet things that came into their heads. How rude I must seem to her—I, who never have even dared to tell her how beautiful she is! And this Werdan, who cannot love her as I do, always succeeds in choosing the very words I wished to say! A hundred more subjects our conversation touched upon, passing superficially over everything, and scarce stopping for a moment on topics of the utmost importance. Still the ghost story found its echo now and then—as some melody in an opera, which returns ever and anon without exciting attention, yet sings in our ears for a long time afterwards.

Eleanor seemed to feel this; for when we took leave she said to us, with a graceful movement of fear:

"I really think your friend, San Giuliano, has bewitched me with his ghost story. I shall not be able to go to sleep without taking Veronica Cibo into my dreams."

"Oh, might I make it the aim of my life to protect you from every dark thought!" Werdan whispered, just loud enough for me to hear. With a look of love in his eyes he kissed her hand as—I alone have a right to kiss it.

But it came worse and worse, and from another quarter.

It was the very next evening. We were all sitting round the tea-table, when Werdan got up, and went to the piano to play a brilliant waltz.

When he had finished, Eleanor begged him to play something serious, upon which he came back to the table, and advised Eleanor to engage Arsent for that purpose, as it was much more in his way.

Eleanor asked Arsent if he really played, and the latter timidly answering, "A little," she begged him to please her by going to the

piano. Prince Ernest frowned. I suppose he did not like his protégé to make himself ridiculous, but he could no longer prevent it.

Arsent sat down stiffly, and began playing one of those tiresome tunes which one hears little children practising for hours together, and thereby driving their relatives and neighbours to despair. A fiend's delight shone from Werdan's eyes as he listened; Prince Ernest's frown grew darker every moment; cousin Dorothy drew out her handkerchief to hide her laughter; and even Eleanor scarcely suppressed a smile.

I listened with surprise to the primitive sounds with which this Prince thought of wooing his heart's love. As I listened, the tones went from octave to octave, the air was no longer distinguishable: as a stream, whose distant murmurings we at first hear indistinctly, but whose rushing noise, as we draw near, almost deafens us—so melody followed melody; the young man's bearing grew into inspiration, and ere ten minutes had elapsed we were all listening to the performance of the most perfect artist. Geoffrey! how shall I describe the change in the expression of the listeners? Werdan's mouth opened in astonishment, his face grew longer every minute; the frown on the Prince's face died away, and his eyes lighted up with pleasure; the affected old cousin rocked her head to and fro like the pendulum of a clock; Eleanor—what do you think Eleanor did? With the soft approach of spring coming to awake its flowers into new life, she glided to the piano, and sat down on a low stool beside it. She then closed her eyes, and with folded hands listened in silent ecstacy to the beautiful sounds. When Arsent began, even I could scarce refrain from laughing; now we found no words to thank him.

Prince Ernest pressed his hands as if in congratulation. Eleanor thanked him joyfully, wishing *him* a good night, *herself* another evening like the one he had just procured her.

This morning the inspection of my copy from Titian took place. Our merry company hurried up the broad staircase of the Uffizii, then along the passage on the walls of which is one of the most interesting collection of Italian men of renown. We threw scarcely a glance into the Tribuna, but went over to the secret passage leading across the Arno to the Pitti Palace.

As we entered the apartments Eleanor threw a friendly glance upon the Caritas group, then we stopped a moment before Fra Bartolomeo's Laying Christ in the Grave, and lastly paused with Prince Ernest before Allori's Judith. We had now reached the window where my Biondo was standing near the original, awaiting the finishing touches. You remember, Geoffrey, how minutely we studied every detail in the master's manner, and will not be surprised if I tell you that none of them had ever seen or expected so good a copy. Prince Ernest gratified me much by saying, "Truly an exquisite talent!"

Arsent hoped that I would some day work for him, and Werdan began reflecting, and stood silent for five minutes; a thing I had never seen him do before.

Eleanor was the only unsatisfied one. "Why do you waste your time in taking copies?" she whispered. Was not that the highest praise of all, Geoffrey? She seemed to claim a sort of right to me, to my talent. And yet——

After a quarter of an hour's contemplation they all turned to go, intending to examine the Madonna della Seggiola on their way.

Eleanor's large blue eyes were turned up to the beautiful picture. The others had moved away: I alone stood by her side, anxious to hear what she would say, now she knew that this was the Fornarina. Her eyelids closed; then she spoke in a whisper.

"I cannot understand the expression in the Madonna's face, if it be not that of a mother's love. Was the Fornarina a mother?"

My innocent darling spoke this so naturally I could have kissed the hem of her garment, as a devotee kisses that of his special saint. Surely it was no business of mine to explain that that tender look of love was intended for Raphael, and not for the child.

When Prince Ernest called us I excused myself, saying I had still my copy to finish. As she gave me her hand, a slight shadow crossed her brow, and she said:

"That copy is an excuse for staying away from us!"

Had it only been possible, how willingly should I have left my picture to its fate! I was greatly astonished to see Werdan remain behind with me, and sit down on a chair near my easel.

"I should like to watch you at work," were the words with which he explained this extraordinary proceeding.

Except once before, at home, he has never honoured me by taking any notice of me. I am a plebeian dauber to him, nothing else. I therefore suspected he had some special reason for spending a whole hour patiently at my side.

He wished to know if I copied Titian alone, or other old masters besides. When I told him that not Titian but Rembrandt was my cheval de bataille, he started up and flung his arms round my neck in so violent a manner as to frighten two English ladies into dropping their opera-glasses to the ground. He then burst forth:

"You must forgive my enthusiasm! I cannot help it, cannot conceal my joy, when I meet genuine talent! You shall see what a patron of the arts I will become from the moment my uncle's fortune passes into my possession." Since then he is continually at my side. Did I not know how very small his chances are with Eleanor, I should feel unhappy when listening to his conceited talk. He is so sure of obtaining her that even I should believe him, did I not feel daily more assured of her indifference to him. Arsent on the contrary daily makes

some progress in her esteem, and I cannot help thinking this natural, when I consider his firm character, his modesty, and his incomparable talent for music. He is just the sort of man who will lie at Eleanor's feet all his life, happy if he only obtain a look from her soft blue eyes.

I have much more to say, but as everything in this world must have an end, so must this letter at last be closed. Farewell, and do not forget

Your friend WALTER.

XVI.

From Home.

Dearest Amy,—How surprised you will be to recognise your friend's handwriting, with the post-mark of Berlin! Yes, we are back again, and if I am to confess all, much to my delight. I cannot help being much happier at home, be it ever so beautiful in other countries. Snow and ice have their own charms, and I missed them dreadfully in Florence.

Ernest's business was over, and as he could not well give a written report of it, he was called back by telegraph.

I am heartily glad to be rid of my two obtrusive admirers; only I fear they will not long shine by their absence, for they had nothing on earth to do in Florence but sit in our rooms, and persuade us to walk and ride out with them.

The artist has returned with us, but our journey home resembled the going as little as I resemble the Eleanor of those times. Yes, Amy, if you could suddenly come upon your gay friend of former days, I doubt if you would recognise her. I am wearied by contending feelings, and although I am not unhappy (I have no reason to be so), still I cannot enjoy one hour's rest. On our journey home Ernest had a long conversation with me, in which he made me understand that it would be his earnest desire to see me accept Arsent. I gave him innumerable reasons for not doing so; but they can have been of very little weight, for Ernest shook his head doubtfully when I had done. What can I say? Arsent has a good heart and high principles; he has a wonderful talent for music; his outward appearance is agreeable, and his love for me more than I deserve. I say all this to myself, and yet I always come to this conclusion: The man with whom I go to the altar must inspire me with something very different from what I feel for Arsent! Tell me, Amy, where have I gained these romantic fancies? There never were any temperaments of this sort in our family, and I have surely not learnt them from you, who never admired anything in the world but Ernest's noble mind and character.

Amy, what I should like to know above all things is whether the Fornarina was thinking of Raphael while sitting for that beautiful picture. If such were the case, I should no longer have a doubt as to not marrying Arsent. To look like that and think of him would be

altogether an impossibility. Fancy my misery when I tell you that I cannot bring myself to ask Ernest this question, and yet I used to tell him all that puzzled me. But now he would explain to me that the Fornarina had no family to take into consideration, and that it entirely depended upon me to turn Arsent into my Raphael! Oh, if I only had but one good reason against it! "My kingdom for a reason!" I should like to exclaim. If I could say that I prefer Werdan to Arsent, I believe Ernest would send them both away, but there would not be a word of truth in that assertion.

Ernest spoke kindly, but seriously. He told me that I had no right to reject a man, in every respect eligible, for a mere fancy, and that he would leave me a month's time to consider. Well, I *am* considering, and getting quite gloomy about it. I scarcely brighten up during the drawing lessons which, for two hours every day, Herr Impach gives me. I draw from the photographs we brought with us from Italy, and I cannot help sighing sometimes, as the sight of them brings back the recollection of the happiest days of my life, when art alone filled every hour with the purest delight. Herr Impach seems to feel something similar to this. When I laid on the table the album we had chosen together, I wished to remind him of times past and gone, and thank him for all he had contributed to render them so happy. As I looked up and opened my lips to speak, I met his eyes, and the expression in them showed that he too remembered. We could neither of us have said more than that look implied, so I only bent down my head, and gave him my hand across the album.

He, I feel sure, would find me some good reason against a marriage with Arsent, if I dared to ask him. But I do not think that Ernest would approve my consulting him on so important a matter.

Cannot you help me with advice, my clever little Amy?

The drawing lessons are not the only hours Herr Impach spends in our house. He sits in the gallery the whole morning, copying I know not which of our pictures. I am not allowed to visit him there, because the large rooms cannot be properly heated, and cousin Dorothy caught cold the first time she went there this winter, so that she watches me anxiously, and will not allow me to put my foot into that part of the house. I do not much care, for it always makes me angry to see Herr Impach copy paintings when he could put his talent to far higher aims.

I have not one pleasant thing to tell you in this letter—everything is disagreeable. Ernest is going away for a few weeks. When he returns, he expects my decision to be given. I know that I shall have got no further than to-day, as my mind is made up already.

Snowdrop is my only comfort in all this. I nurse the flowers that surround it; and when I begin to feel unhappy, I sit down opposite to it for some time. I am sure to derive some consolation from it; and

always get up with the hope that this shadow will pass from my life, and that happy days may still be in store for me.

Before Ernest leaves, cousin Dorothy intends asking him if we may have Herr Impach ("her Raphael," she calls him) here to dinner sometimes. Should Ernest consent, I may reckon upon the young man's spending his whole life with us, for it is one of Dorothy's prominent qualities to abuse of a given permission. Not even his natural obstinacy will enable him to refuse my cousin's importunate invitations.

I am not happy, Amy, very far indeed from happy! May better days follow these dreary ones!

Send a word of consolation to Your Eleanor.

XVII.

Geoffrey! All is over! The fathomless deep, towards which I was blindly hurrying, has opened, and engulfed me.

Dearly must I pay for the happiness I enjoyed but so short a time—with more than life, Geoffrey—for it has cost me *name* and *honour!*

I never cease to repeat to myself how guilty I have been; and yet I scarcely find strength enough to support my misery. Untrue to all the principles of my life, I disgraced myself by becoming the humble servant of a lady of rank, who can repay the sacrifice of my life and honour by nothing more than a kind look. And besides! have I not been a traitor to friendship, to the true brother that you are, all through this fatal love of mine; for the thought of going the short way from Florence to Rome, for the sake of seeing you, never entered my mind. I shuddered at the mere idea of leaving Eleanor for a day. Surely such madness could lead to no good! This chastisement I had, however, not expected.

Listen to the means by which your friend thought to obtain mercy, and was condemned to destruction.

We had scarcely returned home safely, when Prince Ernest once more left, this time alone, while he promised to return in a fortnight. To old cousin Dorothy I owed a daily invitation to dinner. The drawing-lessons were quietly taking their course, and Prince Ernest had requested me to copy a Titian in his gallery, the original of which he desired to have in his study as soon as the gap could be filled by a copy. I asked his permission to copy it twice, as I wished it for myself also. "The whole gallery is of course at your disposal!" was his amiable answer. I was working hard when Werdan one day begged me to take a ride in the Park with him, as he had something important to communicate to me.

He then asked me to make a copy of Rembrandt's Old Woman,

for his uncle, whom he had persuaded to give up all hope of ever obtaining the original.

"That you will use all the talent in your power," he concluded, "I know, when I tell you that my whole life's happiness depends upon the old gentleman's being pleased with it."

I should have liked to refuse, but to my misfortune I suddenly recollected Eleanor's words: "If the old Baron would be content with a copy, we should be only too glad to let him have one."

Eleanor's slightest wish is to me a command. I assented.

Werdan gratefully pressed my hand, promising me a reward equal to the service rendered.

Before we returned home, and after we had spoken of a hundred other subjects, he said, en passant:

"Pray do not mention the matter to the Waldembergs or to any person living. You must give me your word upon that. I will trust your word of honour as implicitly as if it were the word of a nobleman!"

Geoffrey, my friend! never in all your life allow such speeches to beguile your good sense. I have paid dearly for the impatient nod of the head with which I gave the word he half doubted.

It was not difficult to keep the copy secret, for the Prince was absent, and Eleanor was not allowed to come into the gallery.

A month ago I gave my work to the Count; that is to say, he carried it away in my absence, pretending that that was much the safer plan.

What must the Prince think of me, when he remembers how, to agreeably surprise him, I placed the copy of the Titian in the gallery, and the original in his own study?

Too painful is this thought, and I cannot dwell upon it, even if the sufferings awakened by the thought of Eleanor did not consume me. What can I be in her eyes?

But let me tell you the catastrophe, for such the scene was, which closed the happy dream your friend dreamed in the palace of the Waldembergs.

Eleanor and I were sitting in the small conservatory, drawing—that is to say, we were resting at the moment, and eating preserved fruit from a vase she held on her knee. The servant entered and summoned her to the drawing-room. She made the slightest pout, and hurried out of the conservatory. Five minutes later, I too was called, and on entering, found Eleanor talking to a gentleman with an imposing figure, and eyes from which shone the highest gifts of the mind. No wonder that I had instantly admired him; on being presented, I heard the name of the nobleman who is at the same time the Horace and Mæcenas of poetry and painting. He is Eleanor's godfather, and has just returned home from a long Oriental expedition. All the intimate friends were invited to do him honour, and I of course was numbered

amongst them. After dinner the whole company went into the conservatory to take coffee and admire Eleanor's drawings, and from thence into the gallery. The able connoisseur stood still before all the pictures that formerly had been his favourites, and thus it took some time before we reached the round room, where the chefs d'œuvre are hung. Werdan went with Eleanor into the recess of a window. I followed them from jealousy, and also because I could not stand listening to the Prince's praises of my last copy. They began discussing as to whether it was appropriate to rob the collection of the originals. I heard nothing more from the moment Eleanor turned from Werdan, and received me with a smile, until I was startled by the visitor's exclamation :

"I have been looking for more than five minutes for your Rembrandt, Waldemberg, and am curious to hear what better place you could have assigned to it."

"What do you mean?" asked the Prince. Then as he approached the picture, both exclaimed together : "A copy, by heaven!"

I moved nearer. Geoffrey, imagine my horror, if you can. It was my copy! I stood, as if the world around me had suddenly disappeared—Eleanor with it! My blood rushed to the heart, and I could do nothing but stretch out my hand towards the picture to know if all were reality or delusion.

"What do you think of this?" the Prince asked, without turning towards me. I felt all the while that Eleanor's gaze was intently fixed upon me.

"It is certainly—not the—original!" I gasped forth, whilst cold perspiration covered my forehead.

The strange tone of my voice caused the two men at my side to turn round simultaneously.

Prince Ernest's eyes, after a short look of surprise, took an expression of profound sadness. Believe me, Geoffrey, no Virgil, no Dante, has ever described such tortures as I suffered in those moments. Time for me had ceased to be ; every second was an age ; the whole quarter of an hour but one moment. I would renounce happiness for ever rather than again suffer those torments.

"Do you know anything of the fraud committed?" asked Prince Ernest in icy tones. Eleanor stood opposite me, her body bent forward, her eyes wildly staring.

My look wandered round the circle in whose centre I stood. When it met Werdan's face, I knew all. The closed lids, the expressionless features, said more plainly than human speech could have done : "Remember your word!"

Geoffrey, I, an honourable and free man, was to take this ignominy upon myself, was to keep my word : only to show that it was as good as that rascal's—as good as a nobleman's! What irony! I

struggled—I suffered in those moments, Geoffrey, more than words can tell.

On one side stood Eleanor, my fame, my honour, my name, which I must not allow to be trampled in the dust before *her*—the dreadful fact of being suspected by a man like Prince Ernest—my whole career —all the hope of future happiness. On the other side, naught but the slight nod with which I had given my word!

But all was forgotten before the single thought which grew like a falling avalanche, thundering into my ear: "On this side stands your duty! Be true to your pledged word!"

It was victorious. With my eyes looking frankly into the Prince's —he may have thought this an excess of impudence—with a voice scarcely tremulous, and a proud movement of my hand, as I pointed to the dreadful picture, I said:

"The copy is done by me, Prince, but how it came here I know not."

"You confess having made this copy," the Prince exclaimed in anger, "and will not tell the rest! I will have you arrested, if you do not instantly make a full confession."

"I am quite at your disposal."

Eleanor now slowly approached the Prince; she threw a look of horror upon my face, then prayed her brother with uplifted hands to put an end to the painful scene.

"For you I will do it!" he exclaimed. Then, turning to me, he added:

"You leave this house instantly. What more I have to say to you, you must hear by letter. Come, Werdan!"

I saw him take that rascal's arm; saw him motioning to Eleanor to take her godfather's. As I stood on the threshold of the room, I could not help turning round and sending Eleanor one long look, to assert my innocence to her at least. She received it with wondering eyes, turned pale, and ere the strong man at her side could catch her, fell insensible to the ground.

I had made the first step towards her, but the Prince's words, as he bent over her, "*All* the fault of that villain," drove me away.

Since yesterday, when all this happened, I have heard nothing of either Eleanor or Prince Ernest.

Is it not natural, Geoffrey, if I begin to think that my good genius has extinguished his torch, and that power over me is given to the bad spirits of the deep?

I went twice to Werdan's house yesterday, to demand back my word. Both times the answer was, "Not at home." This morning, as the servant opened his mouth to say the same thing again, I pushed him aside and entered the nearest room.

Werdan was lying on the sofa, a cigarette in his mouth, a morning paper in his hands. On my entrance he looked up, and before I could utter a word, he said:

"Oh, you delightful fellow! You have behaved beautifully, upon my word. Your point d'honneur is beyond all doubt now. Come to my arms, and let us be brothers!"

Geoffrey! I tore the paper from his hands—for he was half-covering his face with it—and claimed back my word in the briefest way possible; telling him that I required it to clear myself before those who thought themselves vilely betrayed.

"And if I do not give you back that word of yours?" he asked in a careless tone. I read his anxiety in his look, however. He wished to find out if my silence were safe before he dared refuse.

With more than human force I mastered my rage, and walked up to him. He had risen by this time. With both eyes fixed on his, I said, slowly accentuating every word:

"You have no right to say *if* you did not give it back. My folly, in rashly giving my word, I atoned for in yesterday's dreadful hour. *You* must now do all you can to justify me. How you will manage that is your own business. You have robbed me of the esteem of those I cared for most in all the world; you have stained my name, so as to ruin me perhaps for a lifetime. You cannot intend to be so vile as to continue your shameless game with me! My fame, my name, my honour, perhaps my life, are at stake."

"Do not so excite yourself, my dear fellow, and listen in your turn. I have given my uncle that picture, saying I had bought it. On the day he received it, he made a will in my favour, and has registered the same. By it I am his only heir, heir to all his property and titles. If the good old man hears but a word of this whole affair, I am ruined. Not only will he disinherit me, but he will also stop the generous allowance upon which I have for years chiefly existed. You see that *my* life, *my* honour, *my* name, are also at stake. Now I ask you, will the world be most sorry if Walter Impach be lost to it, or if it miss, for ever, Oscar Count Werdan? Should you refuse to see where the advantage lies, I will speak yet more plainly, and open your eyes to necessity. I have the right wholly on my side, by having been careful enough to demand your word of honour, in case of such an emergency as has now happened. Why on earth this stupid godfather came back from the Kaffirs in Africa just now, I really cannot tell. And why you confessed that the copy was from your hand, you will be best able to explain."

I stood speechless with astonishment at his impudence, and felt my rage getting the better of me. He walked to the window, looked out of it for a few moments, drummed on the panes with his fingers, and looking back towards me at last, continued:

"If my arguments have not yet persuaded you, I will speak the word to which you cannot close your ear. You have always shown true devotion to Princess Eleanor. You can now show that that devotion is strong enough to induce you to make a sacrifice. If you rob me of honour and fortune, you rob her of a husband. To become that, I have firmly resolved. Keep your word for Eleanor's sake; and besides, you must not forget that I intend paying you well. I will warrant that you shall never hear of Prince Ernest again, and will recompense you in a royal manner—make you rich for life. I intend making over to you my mother's fortune, amounting to about 300,000 thalers."

As he said this, victory flashed from his eyes.

Geoffrey, I mastered myself no longer. Whose patience, I ask you, would have resisted so long? I could despise him for everything else; but for this I must punish him in another manner.

"To all your sophism, Count, I have but one answer. It is the question: Will you give me back my word, or not?"

"I should be a precious fool to do so!" was the insolent answer.

"Then you are a villain!"

"Say one word more," he exclaimed, in a rage, "and I will have you turned out by my servants!"

He stretched out his hand for the bell-rope, but I stood before him with my hand raised over him.

"One movement, scoundrel, and I knock you down. You have forfeited your right as a gentleman, but in my fearful position I can do but one thing. I quit this house to send you my seconds."

"Do you believe that I think a man of your sort good enough to fight with?"

"You will have to, if you do not wish me to horsewhip you in the public streets."

These words, uttered with a voice trembling with rage, had their effect.

"You shall pay for that with your life!" he muttered, pale as death. "I will expect your witnesses this very day."

I went away to take the necessary steps for the arrangement of a meeting for life or death.

If I fall, Geoffrey, my friend, then you must hurry to this place, and justify me with Eleanor. I will deposit my will, and a last word to her, in safe hands.

You will hear from me either very soon or never again.

Your friend, WALTER.

(*To be concluded.*)

THE MOTHER OF LORD MACAULAY.

THERE is one point of similarity in the biographies of many great men, and this is, that their mothers have been women of marked character. Those fortunate daughters of Eve who have been privileged to give to the world its grand thinkers and its grand workers seem often to have been of a somewhat different pattern from the rest of their sex.

John Wesley's mother was a woman of strong intellectual power, who would frequently gather round her the poor of the parish and read and expound to them the Scriptures. What lamps of calm thought were the eyes of Jeanne D'Albert—those eyes which rested on her boy, the future hero of Jarnac, the great Henry that was to be! What clouds of tender light, what streams of melody, surround the image of Schillér's mother!

And yet these mothers of great men have not been the women who have written the name of their sex in the temple of fame. The son of Madame D'Arblay, in spite of all the proud hopes on which his cradle was founded, in spite of the ambitious desires which were fondly breathed round his childhood, seems to have turned out a very ordinary young man indeed. No boy of Felicia Hemans (what though her soul did make for him such sweet music as—

> "The rose from the garden has passed away,
> Yet happy, fair boy, is thy natal day,")

inherited, as far as we know, a spark of her genius. No child of Mrs. Siddons ever melted an audience as Romeo or thrilled it as Hamlet.

It appears, then, that those women to whom has fallen the high destiny of watching over the first buds of young genius are, if we may use the expression, of a peculiar sisterhood. They have bright intellects, but no longing to make them shine further than gleams the blaze of the domestic hearth. They have many graces, but these are more suited to glide softly through the home circle than to walk with stately dignity through public assemblies. They have hearts—not the hearts of a St. Teresa or a Florence Nightingale, into which thousands of the weak and weary may creep and find rest—but hearts the whole joy of which it is to feel a few chosen dear ones nestling in their soft warm shelter.

The mother of Lord Macaulay seems to have been peculiarly a woman of this sweet, rare type. She wrote no books, and yet she had a mind which followed year by year the swift ascent of her great son's spirit. She was no drawing-room Queen, and yet she kept her husband

throughout her life her lover. She founded no hospital or orphanage, but she built up a home.

Selina Mills was the daughter of a Bristol bookseller, whose wealth and position doubtless prevented the shadow of the shop from falling much on his child's thoughts and ideas. We know what a nursery of that day was like. Let our little gentlemen and ladies glance at the picture, and be thankful for the century in which their lot has fallen.

On yonder shelf there are two or at the most three story books, in which not a single coloured print lights up the dingy black and white of the letterpress. There is small chance of the volumes ever being added to; and so, if the little folks ever read at all, they must go through and through the same till they know them better than the namse of their uncles and aunts and cousins. What is that in the corner? Is it a doll that walks and talks, or a baby railway that can run round the room in the twentieth part of a second? No; it is a great lumbering wooden horse, into whose unsympathetic head and tail fancy with her airiest spells can scarcely put motion. In that cupboard there is an inexorable physic bottle, a portion of which must without fail be taken by every inhabitant of the nursery at least once a week; there is not the faintest hope of a kind Providence stepping in in the shape of the family doctor, and ordering the little dear instead a glass of claret. Scattered about are various strange, uncomfortable-looking objects, long stiff poles, and wooden collars, and boards of mysterious shape. These articles are all supposed to help in some way in the development of the luckless youthful female form. By-and-by in comes mamma with two or three lady friends. Surely there will be some fun now, and the eyes of the little ones will begin to sparkle. But no; there is only a good deal of curtseying and polite speech-making, a little preaching on one side, and a little subdued crying on the other. Then the ladies rustle out again in their stiff flowery silks, leaving the room a trifle more chilly than when they entered it. Truly, as we turn away our eyes from this picture we, with our modern ideas, are inclined to wonder that the very babies did not become men and women at once, and very dull men and women too.

From such a nursery, however, Selina Mills came forth at length with much brightness and spirit left in her, as her after story proves. She was now fortunate enough to drift into a very favoured region for a girl in her teens. She went to the school kept by the two Miss More's, Hannah and Patty. Who that has dwelt on the story of the literary women of England does not know the figures of those two sisters! How plainly can we see the slight, upright little figure, primly but always becomingly dressed; the animated face with the still delicate features, though the meridian of life is almost past; the clear eyes so full of shrewd intelligence. How distinctly too we can hear her voice: for this clever lady, in spite of the words of King Solomon concerning

the virtue of silence in women, by no means belongs to a silent sisterhood. Her conversation may be somewhat too epigrammatic, but it is never vapid or empty. It is discursive, but never visionary or fanciful. It is a trifle prosy, it is true, at times, but then it is prosy from the mere fact of its having more in it than most mental digestions can bear at once.

When we have thus looked at and listened to the celebrated sister, our eyes easily find their way to her, who, as long as her warm, unselfish heart beat in this world, was never far from Hannah's side. What hearty, happy, self-forgetful admiration there is in Patty's glances as they turn towards her more gifted sister! What thorough good temper puts harmony into her irregular features! How does she brim over with sentiment which may at times be silly, but is never anything save kindly! In woman's history there are few prettier and more touching pictures than that of the united lives of these two sisters. Both, probably, in earlier days had known a stronger but a less peaceful affection. One of Hannah's lovers was, we know, so deeply attached to her, that though he could never get the happy Yes from her lips, he left her when he died his whole fortune: and we always believe that the feeling with which Hannah herself regarded Garrick had in it a touch of hopeless passion. But long after such fires as these had died out, that calm ray of sisterly love shone on for those two women: shone till it mingled with a better light above.

But to return to Selina: she had not been long at the Miss Mores' school before they found out that there was more in her than in most of their pupils, and both sisters began, like kindly fairies, to weave their spells around the girl, working gently upon her. Hannah opened to her the world of books, and what a wonder world that was for the girl's clear, impressionable mind. There were all the gracious band of Shakespeare's women to be made acquaintance with in turn There were the lighter poets to make new music for her inexperienced ear. There was the first calm ecstatic joy of rising heavenward borne on the wings of Milton's spirit.

Patty, for her part, helped to develop—perhaps almost without knowing it herself—the girl's heart: for who could have watched Patty in the unconscious self-forgetfulness of her daily life without having good quietly instilled into them, as mild showers permeate and make beautiful the earth? No doubt, in after years, when, as wife and mother, storms shook her home, as storms do and will at times shake us all, Selina dwelt upon the memory of this old friend of her childhood, and was refreshed and strengthened thereby.

But the best treasure of all that Selina gained at her school was a living and steadfast religious faith. However insufferably dull and priggish Cœlebs may appear to the modern mind (and we must confess ourselves that, had we been in the fair Lucilla's place, we should have

entertained considerable fears of dying some day in a fit of yawning), there is no denying the high moral intention of the book, as, indeed, of all Hannah More's works. Her soul was anchored in the harbour of Eternal peace, and it was quite impossible for any girl to be long near her without her trying to bring the young spirit into the same safe resting place. Selina's nature was peculiarly ready to obey such a call, and from that time forward her Lord became not only her Master but her Friend.

When, at length, Selina Mills left school, she went well endowed for the journey of life. She had an intellect which, though it was not creative, was peculiarly receptive; the safest attribute perhaps of the two for the mind of a woman. She had graces of person which, though they did not dazzle, attracted softly, and held all the more firmly those drawn towards her. She had assured to herself the title deeds of her inheritance in the Everlasting City.

In the days when Selina Mills made her first entrance into society, there was only one possible future open to a young lady. She could not write books, because no young woman in her station ever did such a thing. Hannah More had certainly done it, but then Hannah was the exception which there always must be to prove every rule. She could not devote herself to visiting the poor in back streets, or teaching in ragged schools, because the very clergy themselves would have opened their reverend eyes wide enough, had they been told that such were their duties. She could not start to travel alone around the world, unless she wanted to be followed by a band of all her male relations, and brought back to a lunatic asylum. There was then nothing left for her but matrimony.

Selina Mills had of course to comply with the common order of things, and to look out for a husband. Unluckily, however, none of the gentlemen in Bristol or its neighbourhood were to her taste, and her heart strongly objected to her hand being given without it; though her family, it seems, would not have disliked the arrangement. Such things were done every day in the eighteenth century as they are in the nineteenth.

At length there came upon the scene where Selina was playing the heroine, and no doubt beginning to find the fact of there being no hero somewhat dull, a certain Zachary Macaulay. He came from the coast of Africa, fresh from a life of stirring adventure. He had been fighting hand to hand with the infernal power of the slave trade, a fact which was in itself enough to kindle the fancy of any high-souled woman concerning him. He stood on a lofty pinnacle of moral and religious principle. How he managed it we do not exactly know; perhaps, considering the experiences of his past life, he wooed her something after the Othello fashion, but certain it is that this Zachary Macaulay took the heart of Selina at once by storm. But her relations looked

with no favour on her choice. There was too great a savour of the adventurer to please them about this young man from the African coast. His opinions about the slave trade had not yet begun to be very widely spread. He was no great match in the way of family, for his Scotch ancestry boasted rather of ministers who preached long sermons than of chieftains who fought with long swords. He was no great match in the way of money, for there was something too chivalrous about him for the idea to be entertained that he could ever give his mind much to collecting wealth for himself. No, he was not the husband they wanted for their pretty Selina. But

> "He who stems a stream with sand,
> Or binds a flame with flaxen band,
> Has yet a harder task to prove,
> By stern resolve to conquer love,"

was as true as usual in this case. The lovers had made up their minds, and nothing could shake them.

Hannah More, who still regarded her old pupil with almost motherly affection, and who was at once interested in the matter, invited Selina to stay with her at Barley Wood, and asked Mr. Macaulay to meet her there. Finding him the sort of man she liked and approved of, although he was not exactly a Cœlebs, she at once decidedly favoured the match. Miss Patty, it is true, having just got some new crotchet into her head about woman living for female friendship alone, at first made some mild opposition; but then no one at Barley Wood thought any more of certain periodical sentimental fancies with which Patty was seized than they would have done of the caprices of a pet poodle. So the lovers were allowed to spend the morning together in the garden with a difficult book as a convenient reason, and to sit side by side in the twilight, while Hannah dozed accommodatingly, without the slightest molestation.

At length the steadfastness of the lovers and Hannah More's intercession were victorious, and the pair were allowed to be openly engaged. But Selina's family would not hear of her going out to Africa with her husband: so a long period of weary waiting and separation had to be passed through by her while Mr. Macaulay went abroad for the final winding-up of his affairs in that foreign land: a land, in those days of no steamers and no telegraphs, much more distant and mysteriously indistinct to the mind's eye of those at home in England than it is now. This time of absence was, however, rendered more endurable to the young promised wife by her spending part of it at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, with her lover's sister, Mrs. Babington.

These days of anxious trial were at last over for Selina. Zachary Macaulay returned home in safety, and they were married. The first year of their wedded life was spent in London. It must have been a

considerable change for Selina, for in those days there was a yet wider difference than there is now between a provincial town and the capital.

When, however, the birth of Mrs. Macaulay's first child was at hand, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Babington, with all the pretty fussy anxiety of a young matron, asked her to come and stay at Rothley Temple for the important event. Accordingly, Selina and her baby clothes travelled down into Leicestershire. Rothley Temple was the very embodiment of the popular idea of an old manor house. There were long dark passages in which ghosts might flit up and down. There were deep bay windows in which lovers might whisper. There were broad fireplaces by which grandmothers might sit and tell tales of the olden time. In this house of romance and memory, in the year 1800, Thomas Babington Macaulay was born.

There is no point of her life in which the strong good sense of Selina Macaulay shows itself so fully as in her treatment of her son. Most mothers, from the day when the wonderful boy read fluently at three years old to the day when he made his maiden speech in parliament, would have spent their time in a state of perpetual adoration before him. First in praise of the child, then in honour of the youth, the litany of foolish indiscriminating love would have flowed on, till very likely all that was best in his nature would have been choked by such a cloud of incense. Dearly though she loved her son, proud though were the pulses which stirred her heart when she dreamt of his future, Selina Macaulay never let her affection for him work him injury. When, at seven or eight, he wrote hymns and began epic poems, she talked to him as if such things were as common with boys of his age as marbles or nine-pins. When, with something of the waywardness of young genius, he wanted to be idle, she kept him gently but firmly to the path of steady work. On the other hand, when his father, with that touch of sternness which was inherent in his nature, expected in the boy more thoughtful regularity of conduct than was compatible with either his years or his superabundant energy, she put herself between the two as a judicious barrier.

The affection with which young Macaulay regarded his home seems to have had something almost passionate in its character. We know whose was the genial and gracious influence which, like a golden thread, ran through that large family, from the hard-worked father down to the prattling baby, making that home a place in which her gifted son could find rest and joy; we know it, and feel that the mother of a Thomas Babington Macaulay has as great a mission in the world as a Madame de Stael or an Elizabeth Fry.

One great and good work which Selina Macaulay did for her son was the thorough early knowledge she put into him of Scripture. Macaulay's style and diction would probably never have been what they are if the English Bible had not been thus deeply laid in his

boyish mind and memory. Macaulay's life, and the intoxicating breath of flattery which surrounded him in middle age on the river of hurried work which swept him along, would never have been so true to the right and the noble, had not that old Bible music still been ringing in his heart.

Throughout their long years of married life no single cloud ever darkened the mutual love and trust of Zachary and Selina Macaulay. The very closeness, however, of the tie which bound her to her husband brought Selina many trials. Zachary Macaulay's whole existence was one long struggle against the slave trade. Before that contest was won, those engaged in it had to undergo many a defeat, many a disappointment, to bear patiently many a misinterpretation of pure and lofty intention. The iron firmness of Zachary Macaulay's character enabled him to endure all this with calmness, but the more delicate organisation of his wife felt keenly each blow which was aimed at him. It was a rich life, rich in smiles and tears, the life of Selina Macaulay. There were the elder daughters to be led softly from girlhood into womanhood; there were the little ones to be played with; there was her husband to be talked to with sympathetic comprehension; there was Tom to be listened to when he ran in overflowing with airy fun and racy anecdote.

The home of the Macaulays was for a considerable time at Clapham. There they were surrounded by a little band of friends whose religious and political opinions were entirely congenial to those of Selina's husband; whose hearts, like his, throbbed with a great longing to see the horrors of slavery banished from the British dominions. Even now they rise up before us, that glorious company of the abolitionists—Wilberforce, with his plain face and silver voice, his broken health, and his nature overflowing with cheery life; and Thornton, walking in his own calm grove of thought; and good old Buxton, with his high yet childlike faith, turning to his Bible for a sign before he made a speech; and Zachary Macaulay himself, with his worn intellectual features bearing the marks of his long championship in the cause. It was in a home where men like these went and came familiarly that Selina Macaulay reigned in her woman's kingdom.

Selina did not live to be an old woman, but she lived to see the first rays of his fame shine round her great son. Her end was hastened by the sudden death of one of her daughters; she never recovered the shock. She passed away gently, surrounded by those she loved. As we turn from her story the thought uppermost in our mind is that motherhood is a high mission for woman.

ALICE KING.

MARGARET'S GRAVE.

I.

MARGARET GREY sat in the summer twilight singing to herself a plaintive song that she had learned years before, when she was a light-hearted girl in her pleasant home in merry England.

The moon came softly up in the sky, and bathed her fairer face in its fair light; while the sweet breath of song floated out into the purple atmosphere.

There had been talking in the next room. Mr. Ensor was leaning over his half-promised bride, Leslie Russell. He was a good-looking man of some eight-and-twenty years; and Miss Russell, coquette though she was, loved him.

"To-morrow, or the next day then, you will give me an answer, Leslie?"

What a tender touch his fingers had—what a subtle music lingered in every tone—as he leaned nearer to catch her whispered reply.

And then—instead of the low "Yes" for which he waited, there came that burst of song in the other room; which drowned every other sound as the sunlight drowns the little wave of colour on the rose.

Breathlessly he waited, and Miss Russell glancing up caught the eager glance of enquiry in his look, but not at her.

"You are thinking of the song and not of me," she exclaimed pettishly, for she was frightfully exacting and loved to try him. "You need not expect your answer for a week, Mr. Ensor, though it would only be fair if I should tell you 'no' this minute."

"I will not deny," he said softly, "that the song interrupted me and my thoughts of you—or, I would rather say *met* it like a brave accompaniment. I used to sing it years ago; and, if my memory serves me faithfully, it is a song of youth and love. Can you wonder that it seemed like a prophecy?"

"Are you telling me the truth, Richard?"

He bent over and stole a kiss from her red lips; and murmured the refrain to the song which had so strangely moved him.

"Forgive me," she said, the vexed frown vanishing from her face. "I will not make you wait. I will be your wife, Richard."

"Thank you! thank you, my darling! You have made me the happiest man in the universe! And now you shall tell me who the ugly little singer is who dared to trouble us with her song?"

"You are laughing at me now," she said shyly, as he drew her hand within his. "Margaret Grey is neither little nor ugly."

"Margaret Grey!" In the tone, as he echoed the name, there was a sound as though he had been startled. He coughed it down at once and went on carelessly.

"And is this Margaret Grey a friend of yours? If so, I will never say a word against her."

"Not quite a friend, though papa did bring her here to be a companion for me. I am sure," she said, and a sudden shiver seemed to stir her as though she were cold, "I did not want her. Mamma wishes she had never come away from England!"

"English, too!" he exclaimed, though he could have bitten his tongue out the next minute, to think he had used that unguarded expression.

"*English too!*" repeated Leslie, her bright face glowing a shade paler. "What does that mean, Richard? I hope there is no mystery about Miss Grey. Have you ever known any English girl of the name?"

"There is no mystery about the lady that I know of," he said, laughing. "I was only surprised that your mother should tolerate anything English in her house. You see I am fast learning Mrs. Russell's likes and dislikes, little Blossom."

"Mamma doesn't quite care for her, I believe; but papa, when he was dying, made her promise to be a friend to Margaret, and to have her here always if Miss Grey liked to stay. I think she was the daughter of an old friend of papa's in England."

"But I don't quite understand," cried Mr. Ensor. "If Miss Grey lives here, how is it that I have never before seen her?"

"You are stupid, Richard. She has been away on a long visit to some people, and only returned to-day. There! do not let us talk any longer of Margaret Grey, or I shall be jealous," concluded the foolish girl.

"*You* jealous, Leslie. I never used to think you *could* be jealous!"

"But I can be and am," she replied, with a quick glance from her dark violet eyes. "I am jealous of that home in England which I have never seen, and which you love so well. I am jealous of the very servants who have surrounded you with loving attentions from your boyhood until now; and, more than all, I am jealous of those fair English girls who have been your companions. You are nearly ten years older than I, Richard,—tell me if you loved any other woman before you saw me?"

"Have I not told you a hundred times, you vain young lady, that I do not care for anyone but you?—that I don't know a woman's face save yours? Other forms and faces—no matter how fair—passed me by like shadows; but your face, little Blossom, I know it by heart!"

"Shut your eyes, then, and tell me what it is like."

He shut his eyes and leaned back against the dark velvet cushions of the chair, a half-defined smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"Now begin," she said, softly.

"First," he said, reaching out his hand until he could touch the proud little head, "there are two eyes shining down on me like stars; they are blue in the sunshine, and purple as pansies in the shade; there is a straight little nose, and a beautiful mouth with transparent teeth; rosy cheeks, made for a lover's kisses; a dainty chin with a dimple in it, and a slender white throat, fit only for strings of milk-white pearls! Then, over all, there is a wealth of nut-brown hair around my darling's face, where just now the lilly and the rose are holding sweet contention. May I open my eyes now, Blossom?"

There was no reply; and he looked up suddenly, to find Leslie with her face hidden in her hands, and tears dropping through her fingers.

"Why, Leslie, my darling, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Richard," she said, softly sobbing, "do you really love me as much as you say? When I shall be your wife, will there never be another face to come between us?"

A moment's solemn pause. And then Richard Ensor spoke gravely,

"Trust me, Leslie, *nothing* shall ever come between us. Not even a memory?"

But, even as he went out, he whispered a word or two to Miss Grey in passing. She was then sitting under the stars by the acacia tree.

"Be entirely silent until we have spoken together, Margaret. For my sake."

Never in all her young and careless life had Leslie Russell awakened to joy so great as on that first day after she had promised to be Richard Ensor's wife.

She had her little faults and follies; but she was a good girl withal; and she loved him deeply, and meant to be ever faithful and true.

It was the first day of May. Bird-songs were ringing in the trees, the gay, golden sunbeams were dancing on the greensward; and over the far-away purple hills a mantle of soft mist hung, kissed by the glad morning from sober grey to a brilliant amethyst.

Leslie sat at her window a long time, looking out with sparkling eyes upon the landscape, whose smallest feature had been familiar to her from her childhood; but she did not note much of its varied beauties—she only felt that Richard Ensor loved her, and under that sweet knowledge all the world grew bright.

It seemed to her as if she had no longer any wish ungratified, unless it was—ah, there was Richard himself coming up the walk; and with a gay good-morning nod, she flew down the stairs to welcome him.

But when she reached the hall, Margaret Grey stood like a shadow

in her path ; and she felt half undecided whether to go straight forward to meet her lover, or to turn back. And why this curious feeling in regard to Margaret should have dawned on her, the semi-jealousy, she knew not. Margaret saw her, turned from Mr. Ensor, to whom she was about to speak, and met her with a smile, saying she would take the flowers (some she held in her hand) to the breakfast-room.

"Flowers!" exclaimed Leslie in surprise. "Where did you get such beauties?"

And she bent her head to hide her pink cheeks among the pink blossoms.

"In the woods, dear," Margaret replied, kissing the white forehead lightly, while her own cheeks burned brightly. "They are only simple wild flowers, but I know how your mother enjoys seeing flowers near her always, and so——"

"But there is the garden," Leslie said, a slight surprise in her voice; "it is fairly overflowing with flowers. Could you not have gathered your bouquet there?"

"To tell the truth, I believe the bright morning tempted me," replied Margaret. "And you know your mother was longing yesterday for some wild flowers. I was up hours ago," she added, laughing, and vanished.

At that moment the walnut leaves of the outer door swung open, and Mr. Ensor came in, a perplexed look in his dark eyes. But it was succeeded by an expression of instant relief when he saw Leslie.

"*Dear* Leslie!" Mr. Ensor murmured, as she met him. "You must forgive this early intrusion, but I could wait no longer to know if my happiness was a reality! The shadows of the night made me half afraid that the hope was, after all, only a dream."

"A pleasant dream is sometimes better than the reality!" Leslie said, laughing.

"But not in this case," he rejoined. "I wish I had you safe and sure, my darling."

Looking up, Leslie saw her mother standing silent on the stairs above. Her face was very pale, and she struggled vainly with the emotions which strove to master her.

"Mamma, dear mamma!" Leslie cried, dropping her lover's hand, and running up to meet her mother. "What is the matter?"

But her mother's face was turned away, and her hand was cold in Leslie's grasp.

"Mrs. Russell, will you give me just ten minutes before breakfast?" asked Mr. Ensor.

"As many minutes as you wish," she replied, a little haughtily. "You are an early visitor. We do not breakfast until ten. Leslie, wait for me ; I will see Mr. Ensor in the library."

Leslie obeyed in silence ; she did not like the look on Mrs. Russell's

face. She turned into the breakfast-room, where she stood idly by the table, and pulled to pieces the tiny bouquet Margaret had left at her plate.

Mrs. Russell went on to the library, and when they were shut in, motioned her visitor to a seat opposite her own.

"And now, Mr. Ensor, what is it you have to say to me?"

"I want you to give me your daughter," he said, coming at once to the point. "I have loved her for some time, Mrs. Russell. Last night I spoke, and asked her to be my wife."

"And what did Miss Russell say?"

"She acknowledged that she *loved* me," he said, with a smile of sweet triumph in his eyes. "I do not think that you will refuse to make us happy, Mrs. Russell?"

"I refuse you nothing," she said, calmly; "but as Leslie has no father to look after her interests, you must excuse me if I enquire into your capability of suitably maintaining my daughter."

"It is only right that you should do so," Mr. Ensor frankly answered. "Hitherto my income has been comparatively small, an easy competence; but my uncle is now dead—as you have, I think, heard—and I am his sole heir. I wish to go home to England as soon as may be now, to enter into possession of the estate."

"And his estate was—?" Mrs. Russell began, leaning eagerly forward.

There was some scorn on Mr. Ensor's face, but he suppressed it at once. Mrs. Russell was mercenary to a degree.

"Your daughter loved me as a poor man, Mrs. Russell; but to you I will say that my income will be a very large one. Vouchers for it shall be laid before you."

A swift red mantled Mrs. Russell's face and neck, but she managed to rise with her usual dignity.

"We must think of everything," she said, giving her hand to her future son-in-law. "Young people, lovers especially, think they can live on sentiment; but those of us who have gained experience in the world know differently!"

"You are satisfied, then, with Leslie's decision?"

"Yes," she said. And Mrs. Russell sank back in her chair with a satisfied smile on her face. For she had done just what she had always intended to do—secured a rich husband for her daughter.

Margaret Grey had fought a stern battle with her own heart, and come off conqueror.

A dozen times she had said to herself that first night that she would go to Richard Ensor, and insist upon his speaking. But she did not do it; perhaps for the sake of those old happy times in Europe.

"I have sacrificed so much for them all. Must I make yet another sacrifice for Leslie's sake?"

But then, over and above every bitter feeling was the memory of the light kiss Leslie Russell had left on her lips in greeting. Her heart thrilled as she thought of it; her eyes ran over with tears. For if there was one quality Margaret possessed above all, it was that of tender affection.

"No!" she exclaimed. "Mine shall not be the hand to dash down her cup of happiness. If I must live in silence, and carry these secrets to the grave with me, I will not make a hardship of the duty. Still, I think—I think he ought not to deceive her."

And brushing the waves of dark hair back from her brow, she tied on her pretty gypsy hat, and went down stairs and out, to gather her wild flowers. Coming back, she had seen Mr. Ensor.

"Richard!"

He turned swiftly. "Not here, not now, Margaret. We may be seen from the windows."

"But, Richard!" she murmured, half under her breath.

"Do not speak here, dear Margaret, though I know you have every right. I will meet you early to-morrow morning when you go to the wood to gather your wild flowers. We can talk there without fear of interruption."

She bowed in assent. He opened the gate for her to pass through before him, and lifted his hat.

And Leslie, watching from an upper window, had seen all this. A little spasm of jealousy stirred her heart-strings; a shadow, light as a summer cloud, rested on her brow.

"Of course, Richard had to open the gate for her; he is always a gentleman," she told herself. "But—they talked and looked as though they knew each other."

And on that first night, now just past, when Richard Ensor reached his hotel in the town hard by, he began pacing his chamber with restless steps, as though something called him. Curious thoughts were troubling his brain.

"How the old faces come back!—and how false those days were when I told myself I was half-forgetting! Poor Margaret: I *am* sorry for her; yet I am *not* brave enough to tell Leslie the truth!"

And flinging up the window, he sat down to think out his puzzle.

Thoughts came fast thronging to his brain of the old, happy days in Europe; of these new, still happier days in America; and in all, this new-found happiness he had cherished no remembrance of poor lonely Margaret; no pity for her desolation.

Mr. Ensor went forth on the appointed morning to his meeting with Margaret Grey. What passed between them was spoken of by neither. At Mrs. Russell's there was no token given that they had ever known each other: even Leslie thought she must have been

mistaken. And in a day or two's time Margaret Grey showed an invitation that some friends had sent her, and went away again.

"It was no loss," said Mrs. Russell, "for she was sad enough to throw a gloom on the house."

And Richard Ensor married Miss Russell, and took her to his own home in England.

It was at Guerre, a quaint little town in the south of France.

Mr. and Mrs. Ensor, husband and wife for twelve months now, had halted at it. Fatigued with the London season, distracted with gaiety, they had gone forth on the continent, which he seemed to know so well, and travelled slowly and easily from place to place, just as whim or will prompted. They had not meant to stay at Guerre; it was but a stupid place at the best, Mr. Ensor told his wife; he had passed a short time at it once; but the breaking down of their travelling carriage compelled a halt at it. They did not favour the noisy and bustling railways, rather preferring to take their wanderings easily. Mr. Ensor, who appeared to chafe unaccountably at the delay, went to see after the damaged carriage, as soon as he had deposited his wife safely at the inn; a rural domicile, just outside the town, and standing in the midst of a lovely garden and still more lovely scenery. It turned out that the carriage had been damaged more than was supposed; two days would not more than suffice to mend it.

"What a fool I was to shape our course through Guerre!" mentally uttered Mr. Ensor. "And why did I? Only through some absurdly romantic wish of catching a glimpse of the old place again. But I meant to drive straight through it: not to stop. One would think Fate was at work. Fool, fool!"

His wife meanwhile was standing on the balcony of their bedroom at the Pomme d'Or—as the inn was somewhat fancifully styled—gazing at the enchanting scenery, and listening for the return of her husband. He came in with a somewhat weary step and joined her on the balcony. She nestled close to him, leaning her pretty face upon his breast.

"No one can disturb us now, Richard," she said. "No balls, or dinners, or tiresome visitors are here. I could fancy that we were alone in the world. See how those beautiful vines shut us in, and surround us with a fragrance that is like a breath of Paradise."

In good truth they did seem alone as they stood. The clustering vines trailed thickly around the trellis-work of the balcony, shutting them in from the outer world.

"The fellow says he cannot get the carriage done under two days," cried Mr. Ensor, turning from the poetical to the practical. "What on earth we shall do, I can't tell."

"Do! Why, Richard, it will be delightful. I should like to stay here for weeks, instead of days."

"Oh should you," cried Richard, rather crossly. "My dear Leslie, you don't know what even a day's sojourn in these stupid dead-alive places is!—wearisome to a degree."

"It puts me in mind of my own dear land, Richard. Indeed, I like it. And—don't you remember—we have each other."

He looked down at her as she spoke, breathing the words in a tender whisper. For she loved her husband in a very passionate manner that perhaps was less wholesome than pleasant. For such love, when it exists, is apt to be too exacting, and to foster jealousy. The sun flickered on her face, now upturned to his, through the gently-waving vines, and Richard Ensor had never thought it so fair.

"We might perhaps hire another carriage, and get on to-morrow morning, Leslie. I tell you candidly I cannot stand two days of it."

"What, not with *me!* Oh Richard!"—holding up her pretty finger in laughing reproof. "Then you would have to go on without me; for in this charming place I must stop. And why do you talk so? It is as though you had some pressing business at the other end of the world, and must gallop on night and day to transact it."

He said no more. That idea of hiring a carriage occurred to him again and again; but he did not see his way clear to put it practically in force. For the very haste to get away from Guerre might perhaps excite suspicion in Leslie's mind. At least his all-too-suggestive conscience told him so. As Shakespeare says, Conscience makes us all cowards.

Mrs. Ensor was not very well the next morning. She got up, partly dressed, and had her breakfast taken to her room. Richard, going to her when his own breakfast was over, found her looking as white as her dressing-gown.

"Why, my darling, you have eaten nothing!"

"I cannot eat in a morning just now; you know it, Richard. I will try again by-and-by."

"Do so. And I think you had better lie down again, Leslie. You must not fatigue yourself, remember."

"Perhaps I will. You are going out, I see."

"I am going to see after that precious carriage."

Giving her a farewell kiss, Mr. Ensor went down stairs. Leslie stepped on to the balcony to watch him away with her eyes of love. At the far corner of it she could see a little portion of the garden path through one of the openings in the trellis-work.

And the air, as she stood there, felt so soft and balmy, so refreshing to her somewhat sick frame, that she resolved to finish dressing at once, and walk about the garden until he returned.

But the exertion wonderfully revived her. And, once in the garden,

she felt so well that she strolled into the road, leaving word with the landlady, who sat at the inn door shelling peas, that if Monsieur came in she had gone towards the town.

"But I daresay I shall meet him," thought Leslie. "I wonder whereabouts the coach-mender's place is? Richard said it was no better than a shed."

The sun was shining in the sky; but some white fleecy clouds broke its heat. The town was close at hand, Mrs. Ensor found: and she was soon at the entrance of the first street. All in a moment she caught sight of her husband, at a distance, apparently bargaining with a little flower-girl. As she began to quicken her pace to catch him, he disappeared.

"Flowers, lady?" asked the child, meeting her, and holding up the basket; in which roses and heartseases were respectively tied up in bunches. "They are very fair."

"So they are," said Leslie, who was a dear lover of flowers. "But do you find much sale for them, my child? I should have thought not: every house seems to have its own flowers here."

"Not those houses in the street further on, lady. And I sell them to the travellers. One or other of the two inns has often voyagers descending at it."

The child held up two of the bouquets as she spoke, so that the light might shine on them, and their perfume be brought nearer to the lady. Leslie took both in her hand.

"I wonder, she said," with a dreamy smile," which is the prettier of the two?"

"The roses are as sweet as an angel's breath," the child answered, almost in a whisper; "but the purple pansies are sweeter. They are like your eyes, dear lady."

Leslie hesitated, quite ready to take both, but that a thought had occurred to her.

"I fancied I saw a gentleman buying some of you. Which did he take?"

"He took violets, lady."

"*Violets?*"

The child turned up a corner of the thin white cloth that covered the bottom of the basket, and displayed two or three bunches of violets.

"The time is nearly over for them, and they are getting scarce, lady," she said. "We keep them for the cemetery."

"What—to put upon the graves there?"

"Yes, it is our custom at Guerre. Few people wear violets. They spare them all for their dead lovers who are lying in the cold earth."

"And yet the gentleman bought violets, you say," said Leslie, smiling.

"I think he has a dead one lying there also, lady, for he turned off

straight to the cemetery with the violets. He was buying the roses at first, but he saw the violets accidentally, and I told him we kept them for the dear ones who were gone to be with the angels. He would buy some too, he said: and he put down the roses for the violets, and left a twenty-sous piece in my basket, never waiting for the change."

"Very odd," thought Leslie. "Perhaps the coach-mender lives that way. I will take the roses, my child, she said, and I will give you a franc too."

The little girl's eyes filled with tears. She had a sick mother; and she said—and felt—that the Bon Dieu must have sent this generous lady and gentleman in her way.

Leslie stepped on to the side road which her husband had taken, and found that it led to the cemetery. But it seemed to lead to nothing else: no houses stood there, not even the coach-mender's shed; it was a long, straight road, with tall poplar trees growing on either side. Mr. Ensor was evidently bound for the cemetery; he was walking on quickly, and Leslie could but just discern him in the distance. She followed quickly also, in some curiosity.

A quarter of an hour brought her to the graveyard; a sheltered spot, where the grass was green. It was very lonely, seeming to be filled solely with the graves of the dead, and the clustering shrubs and the trees that watched over them. Not a sign could Leslie see of any living person; not even of her husband.

All in a minute she saw him at a far-off grave in a corner. He had his back to her, and was standing bareheaded and quite silent, his face bent a little, as though he were praying. Leslie halted in very astonishment, and stood where she was. Suddenly his head was lifted. He undid the bunch of violets in his hand, and scattered them on the marble slab; and then he was still again, his head bent.

What feeling it was that induced Mrs. Ensor to step behind a high tombstone while he passed her, down the path, after quitting the grave, she could not have told. Some subtle instinct possibly. At any rate, it was what she did. And when Mr. Ensor was fairly launched on the highway between the poplars on his way back to Guerre, she walked up to look at the tomb and the scattered violets, and to read its inscription:—

"Sacred to the Memory of
MARGARET VIOLA, the beloved Wife of RICHARD ENSOR.
Age 18."

To say that the present wife of Richard Ensor did not for a few moments credit her sight or her senses, that she was more bewildered than she had ever been in her whole life before, would be saying little. Staggering back against an opposite tombstone, Leslie strove to collect herself.

"Margaret Viola! Why that was Margaret Grey!—the Margaret who had lived with them in America. Her name was Viola as well as Margaret. Viola Margaret, as Leslie had always believed, and those who placed it on this tomb had put the wrong name first. Was Margaret *dead?*—she did not know it. She had not heard of Margaret since that long-ago time when she had written to decline to come to their wedding. What did it all mean? Margaret was certainly alive then: and—why—then—how could she—she, herself, Leslie—how could she be his wife?"

Sick and faint, with a deathly moisture clinging to her brow, poor Leslie Ensor strove to think it out, to bring light out of chaos. The more she thought, the worse it looked: for she could see but one solution.

Margaret Grey must have been his wife, and Margaret must have come to this remote French village during the past twelvemonth, and died.

What was she to do? Oh, what ought her course to be?

Smarting, stung, outraged in every sense and feeling, Leslie Ensor quitted the spot with a great cry, and went swiftly back to the Pomme d'Or. She was very nearly mad; and perhaps little more responsible for her actions in that dreadful hour than a true madwoman would have been.

"Monsieur votre Mari has been in after you, madame," was the salutation of the hostess; who had finished her peas and now sat picking the salad. "He is gone back to the town to look for you."

"C'est bien," responded Leslie: and tore up the stairs like a mad thing.

Pressing a change of linen into a black hand-bag, flinging a waterproof cloak over her dainty morning dress, and possessing herself of her larger purse—which had a good bit of money in it—Leslie Ensor quitted the Pomme d'Or. Madame had gone to the pump, there to wash the salad, and did not see her depart. Leslie knew there was a railway station about half a league off, for the carriage had passed it the previous day: and away she went towards it, panting and sighing, with fleet feet that hardly seemed to touch the ground.

"For what place does Madame wish to take her ticket?" questioned the clerk, who was a female, and looked and spoke like a lady, perceiving Leslie waiting there when she opened the pigeon holes.

"For—Paris," replied Leslie in her dilemma: for she was entirely ignorant of the name of any nearer town.

"Paris!" repeated the lady. "Then Madame must wait two hours and forty minutes. No train goes in that direction before then."

That would never do. "Where does the next train go to, and when will it be in?" she asked aloud.

"It goes to many places. The next train will be here in ten

minutes. It will wait here ten minutes also, to allow an express to pass."

"Please to give me a ticket for—any place that is far off," said Leslie. "First-class." And the bureau dame gravely handed her a ticket with a long name upon it, and charged her twenty-three francs.

Down on a bench at the darkened end of the platform sat poor Leslie, not daring to go into the waiting-room lest she should be found. If her husband came up in pursuit, the waiting-rooms were the first places he would make for. What a deplorable oversight it was to have brought no veil! But in these impromptu flights one cannot think of everything.

"Margaret Viola, the beloved wife of Richard Ensor!"

The fatal words kept repeating themselves in her mind. "Eighteen?" she presently said in a dull dreamy kind of way. "Did she tell him she was only that? Deceit, deceit; deceit on all sides. She must be six-and-twenty at least."

Here came the train, slowly and cautiously into the station, as it is the good custom of French trains to come. Leslie glided out of her obscure corner, hoping in her ignorance to take her place at once. She would feel safer in the train than out of it.

"Leslie! Leslie Ensor!"

The salutation, spoken with intense surprise, came from a lady who was descending from a carriage, and met Leslie face to face. A piercing shriek echoed along the platform—the shriek of a woman in terror. Leslie thought she saw the dead; for in this woman, who spoke to her, she recognised Margaret Grey. And before the shriek had well faded from her lips, she fell down in a fainting fit. The porters carried her into the spacious waiting-room, and ran for some water.

And when the train had departed after the express had passed, and the station was quiet again, madame of the bureau came in to see what she could do for the sick lady. But the lady was better then, and had got half through the necessary explanation with Margaret Grey.

"And you are not dead! And you never were Richard's wife?"

"Neither the one nor the other," said Margaret. "I landed at Havre a day or two ago from a passenger vessel bound to that port from America, and have made my way on here——"

"To see me?" interrupted Leslie.

"To see my poor young sister's grave," answered Margaret. "I did not know you were not in London. I meant to come to your residence there shortly, to deliver the messages and other things I have brought you from your mother."

"But you must tell me all about the other Margaret; all, all," sobbed Leslie.

"My dear child, I have told you all: perhaps you were too bewil-

dered to understand me. She was my sister. There was a difference of several years in our ages, and I cared for her almost as I should have cared for a child. I was Viola Margaret, she Margaret Viola: it was a fancy of our mother's to give us the same names, which were her own, reversed. During my mother's last illness we were staying here, at Guerre. Richard Ensor, travelling from place to place, as he loved to do, came here one day, and was introduced to us. He was taken with my sister, and she with him, and they married upon impulse before they had known each other a month. Close upon that, my mother died. Her income, a very small one, died with her, and I went to London to look out for a situation. Mr. Ensor and my sister would have had me stay with them at Guerre, where they intended to remain for a time, but I wanted to be independent. In London I met your papa, Leslie. He had once been on the closest terms of friendship with my father; and he insisted upon my making my home with you in America, but—you must pardon me for saying this, Leslie—your mother received me so coldly, and manifested so great a dislike to 'the English,' that I did not stay with her a week; as you may have remembered to have heard. You were at school. I had other friends in America, at a distance from you, and I made an excuse to go to them: and I left your mother's house without once having spoken to her of my sister or of Mr. Ensor; for in truth Mrs. Russell repelled me so much that I could not enter upon any topic connected with self. I procured a situation as governess close to the home of my new friends. The first news that reached me was of the death of Mr. Russell; the next news was from France, and told me of the death of my poor young sister, who died and was buried at Guerre. After that I heard nothing of Mr. Ensor, and a twelvemonth, or so, passed. I was leaving my situation, and your mother wrote to ask me to stay a little time with her and be your companion. I——"

"And you came; and joined Mr. Ensor," interrupted Leslie; "and you appeared not to know each other, but to be strangers."

"Even so. I had not been in your house ten minutes, Leslie, when your mother spoke to me of a Mr. Ensor. She thought he was making up to you, and she was not quite satisfied about it: firstly, because she did not know whether he had good means, secondly because he was English. The name struck me. 'Is he a widower?' I asked. 'Widower!' she indignantly replied, 'what put that in your head, Margaret Grey? Do you suppose Leslie would think of marrying a widower? She hates them!' But that same evening I found it was the same Richard Ensor. He seized a moment to speak to me. 'Be silent until I can explain,' he whispered. And when I saw him alone he entered on his explanation. It appeared that he fell in love with you at first sight. He did not at first mention that he was a widower:

perhaps a man rarely hastens to do so: and before he could find an opportunity, he heard you express your antipathy to widowers, and say that nothing would induce you to marry one. 'I can't give her up, Margaret,' he said to me; 'I love her too well. If you will only be silent she need never know that Viola was my first wife.' Of course, I promised to keep his counsel; what right had I to betray him? But I did not like it, and went away again as soon as I could. That's the whole truth, Leslie. And you, you silly child, must take it into your head that I was the tenant of that grave, and run away in consequence!"

Leslie leaned her face against Margaret, shedding some happy tears. The truth was so very much brighter than the dreadful improbabilities she had suspected, that she felt as though she were in Heaven.

"Do you think Richard will forgive me, Margaret?" came the sobbing words.

"We can ask him. And perhaps we had better go back to the Pomme d'Or at once, Leslie, or he may be for setting the town crier to work."

"You will stay here now for a few days, won't you, Richard?" pleaded the young wife, as she stood nestling to him that evening on the vine-wreathed balcony. "You don't want to hurry away now?"

"I will stay as long as you like, my darling. All I feared was that you should see some one or other of the natives recognise me; or discover that grave in the cemetery."

"If you had but confided in me, Richard!"

"My dear wife, I always intended to tell you sometime. But I was a coward, and put it off. You can never know what a nightmare it has been to me."

"I shall take some violets to it myself to-morrow, Richard. May we not take some together?"

"Yes; oh yes. Thank Heaven for this peace—which is more than I deserve," fervently spoke Richard Ensor. "Thank Heaven for all things!"

EVE: AN IDYLL.

I. Town.

I AM quite sensible of the advantage of being born "the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," and rejoice that I live in the days of railroads, telegraphic wires, cheap postage, and chloroform. But I delight in looking back from my present "vantage ground" on to the stormy plains of the past, and find it quite refreshing to picture it to myself in all its strong contrasts of gorgeous colour, and striking effects of chiaroscuro—virtue so resplendent, vice so deep in gloom—and the wide distinctions made more conspicuous by all the varieties of costume.

It is like turning from a nice smooth painting on papier-maché to a fine rugged old Rembrandt.

More especially do I like to pay an occasional morning visit—at no such great distance—to my great, great grandmother; and I politely offer you a seat in Fancy's car, if you are inclined to accompany me on the journey.

Those were

> "The teacup days of paint and patch,
> And when the hoop was worn,"

before steam had "annihilated time and space," whirling all classes together across country, in one undistinguishable mass—when my lord and my lady lumbered along in a coach and six, exposed to all manner of dangers from holes and highwaymen; and Joan and Hodge, if bent on beholding the "gold-paved streets of Lon'on," must trudge afoot, or spend days, and even weeks, jolting in a waggon—when upon the smallest provocation swords were drawn and blood was spilt, and many a crime was committed for which the perpetrators were never called to account. Then fine ladies were very fine indeed, and lords were often very foppish, while the rustic peasantry were really rustic, for town or country seemed "far as the poles asunder." The world at home then knew little of what was going on abroad, or not till long after the events had taken place. Special correspondents had never been heard of; and the newspapers, or newsletters, as they were sometimes called, were small affairs indeed; not, as now, sheets that seem made for the perusal of giants.

But perhaps you think it time I should begin my story, if I have one to tell. How I came to know it is neither here nor there; I will tell it if you will listen.

Sometime in the earlier half of the last century—I am not quite sure of the exact date, so will not commit myself—the Countess of Millamant, then a young widow, was one of the reigning queens of fashion. Rich and beautiful, with some wit, and many whims, she was adored by the men, slandered by the women, and envied by all. She cared for none of her suitors; but kept them all chained to her footstool. Capricious as her pet monkey, and spiteful as her parrot, but beautiful as an angel, she was worshipped, fêted, and lampooned. All courted her for one cause or another; and she was now just beginning to be sick of adulation and of pleasure. Weary of continual sunshine, she even longed for a passing cloud, and, in short, was ready to die of ennui, under its then fashionable title of spleen.

See her holding her little court this fine June morning in—don't be shocked—her bed-chamber, and in—don't be still more shocked—her bed. Yes, there she is, in the midst of clouds of lace, cambric, and fine linen, looking—I really must use the well-worn simile, it is so appropriate—like Venus rising from the sea foam. Her face is made up for the day, and glows with artificial brilliancy—her large brown eyes, which no art can alter, shining with a lustre all their own, and appearing unnaturally conspicuous, amid the mass of white paint and powder which conceals both hair and skin.

Her bed is all satin and lace, the quilt a miracle of embroidery, fit screen before so fair a shrine. The lofty room is hung with finest tapestry, where nymphs and cupids disport themselves in airy attitudes and scanty garments. The carpet is of thickest pile, the toilette a little museum of curiosities, and tall Venetian mirrors reflect and multiply the luxurious scene.

I said the Countess was holding her court; the courtiers all of the male sex; and no harm was thought. French manners prevailed in the highest classes, and the reigning beauties often received their earliest bevy of adorers half concealed by the gorgeous curtains of their nightly couch.

Now, who were the adorers? First, shall the Church have preference. The family chaplain, in a distant window, flirted with the attendant abigail. Not daring to raise his eyes to the glorious midday sun, he worshipped its pale reflection in the moon, as personified by comely Mistress Prudence, so by name at least, if not by nature. The army was represented by Captain Terence O'Brien, a descendant of all the kings of Ireland; but descended so low that he would have been well content to forego his chance of the lovely widow's hand, could he only have hoped she would bestow on him a gift or loan to enable him to continue his gambling speculations.

A brace of lordlings were foremost in the picture. One, fair and foolish, loved the lady for herself; the other, an ugly fellow, with sharp wits and flattering tongue, sought to repair his fallen fortunes at her

expense. A millionaire courted her for fashion's sake; a diplomatist to further his political schemes. All bowed before the idol of the hour, who yawned in their faces as she idly turned her attention to the choice of ribbons for the day.

The conversation, as might be expected among rivals, was rather broken and disjointed, and interspersed with a good deal of snapping and snarling, the highest notes of the concert being the voices of the two young lords; while the Irishman, talking incessantly in a rich unctuous brogue, furnished a fine pedal base to the score.

"Ah!" said Lord Lackland, "that shows thy want of taste, my friend. What could suit a cheek of rose so well as the rose's own hue? The Queen of Flowers and the Queen of Beauty combined."

"Nay," rejoined Faircourt, "if we must needs follow suit, does not coquelicot match the coral of those lips?"

"Or," said a trembling youth, who had hitherto been all eyes and silent tongue, "why not azure? The hue of heaven for one all but divine."

This sally was received with some derision, and the lady, in a querulous tone, asked if 'twere not a pity he could not say the blue would match her eyes. Sir Terence O'Brien swore the heavens ought to be hung with black in their honour; and with the laugh which followed came a chorus of laudatory remarks on those certainly magnificent orbs, which their owner received with ill-disguised contempt, asking if there was not one man of parts among them who could furnish a newer theme.

Then she called for her jewels, and the couch soon glittered with the contents of half a dozen caskets. This brought the millionaire to the front, who produced a costly pendent as an offering to the fair one. She accepted it with calm indifference, and, scarcely thanking the munificent donor, tossed it aside among the other trinkets.

Now, the disdain and caprice of this spoiled beauty were genuine—the result of the hotbed of prosperity in which she had been reared. She had lived in luxury and listened to adulation till both had lost their power to please. But, strange to say, her very faults added to her popularity. Had she assumed these airs to enhance the piquancy of her charms, she could not have succeeded better; and when the servile crowd was dismissed that day, that she might proceed to the business of the toilette, all departed more enamoured than ever of the undeniable charms of her person and her purse.

That night there were masks at a fashionable place of public resort, and Lady Millamant must needs be there; not that she expected much enjoyment, but because she did not know what to do at home. Too indolent to devise a fancy costume, she would wear a domino; but ere the domino was donned, a long and most elaborate toilette was completed. A dress of the richest brocade, with flowers in their natural

colours, interspersed with threads of gold, was trimmed with the finest lace and knots of ribbon mixed with strings of pearls. All spread out over panniers of enormous size, displayed to advantage the beauty of the material and the stately grace of the wearer: while her powdered hair, raised on cushions nearly two feet above her head, blazed with diamonds, and derived additional grandeur from a plume of feathers, which, like a palm-tree on the top of a high hill, surmounted the whole. And it must be admitted that, exaggerated and artificial as was the dress, the effect of the whole figure was wondrous beautiful. The clear whiteness of the hair and powdered skin, and of the white ground of the dress, brought out her dark eyes and brows—the only dark objects about her, except an "assassin" near her mouth—with a lustre which was absolutely dazzling. And when her beautiful features lost for a moment their usual expression of indolent languor in the triumph of conscious beauty, as she gazed at her full-length reflection in the glass, none who saw her could dispute her claim to reign a goddess in the hearts of men.

When she arrived at the ball it was already crowded. A black velvet mask covered her features, and a domino eclipsed the splendour of her dress; but to those well acquainted with her, the carriage of her head, and the grace of her movements, revealed the divinity within, and she was soon surrounded by an admiring throng.

Though all were masked, most of them she recognised in her turn by some trick of gesture or peculiarity of voice; but, as she gazed around, her attention was arrested by the entrance of a person she felt sure she had never met before. Yet he seemed one well worth the knowing. Like the rest a mask concealed his face, but the domino displaced, and hanging on his arm, displayed in full the supreme elegance of his tall figure, and the unparalleled magnificence of his dress. The extended skirts of his blue velvet coat set off the richness of the silver embroidery; his buttons and buckles, of diamonds of the finest water, eclipsed all the surrounding paste! his sword-hilt blazed with gems, and the lace of his cravat and ruffles might have moved the envy of the proudest belle. He wore his own hair, powdered, then rather unusual; indeed, all about him was somewhat singular, though certainly singularly elegant.

His appearance caused a flutter of excitement, and the whisper "Who is he?" went round the circle. The men criticized, the women admired. At last one better informed than the rest, proclaimed him to be the young Marquis of Riverdale, son of the Duke of Broadlands, who had just returned from long travel in France and Italy: and a certain foreign air, and the fact that he was new to the world, seemed to justify the assertion.

Our Countess, as he approached, moved perhaps by a desire that the admiration she felt should be reciprocal, under pretence of heat,

removed her mask, and throwing back her domino, appeared suddenly in the full blaze of her unrivalled beauty. The unknown started, and turning to the nearest bystander, eagerly enquired her name.

"What, sir," said the person addressed; "not know the Countess Millamant? You must be indeed a stranger to the town, not to know the fairest woman in it."

"I have been long abroad," quoth he, "and have seen too many fairest women to bear any of them long in mind; but this is, I must admit, a splendid beauty."

So saying, he advanced towards the Countess, and with the freedom a mask allows, addressed her in the high-flown language of the day, begging permission to worship as a pilgrim at the shrine of Venus. This she graciously accorded, provided he could bring some flowers of wit and wisdom as an offering to the goddess.

"Madam," cried the stranger, "beauty like yours might inspire the dullest brain, as well as move the coldest heart, did not awe enchain the tongue." And so they went on for some time, till both seemed tired of the mimic courtship. They remained the most conspicuous figures among the gay and motley throng, but did not seek one another again.

As Lady Millamant went home that night, borne in her gilded, cushioned chair, at the brisk trot of two strapping Irishmen, her lacqueys at once lighting and clearing the way before her, she reflected with many sighs on the emptiness of worldly pleasures. Oh, for a new sensation; for anything which could produce other feelings than weariness and vexation, gambling. "I might have been ruined, but luck and my large fortune were against me, and I never lost or won at cards enough to give me pleasure, or to cause a pang. Love!—ah! that were no doubt emotion—joy, sorrow, hope, and fear in one, but I have never known it, and I never shall. My husband's age precluded the possibility of any warmer feeling than esteem, and as to the poor creatures who surround me, and feel, or feign, a flame—how to reciprocate it for any one of them? The pretty fellows are so often rakes, the men of parts are mostly prigs, foolish, foppish, false—and tiresome all. To-night, the travelled air, the noble mien of the Marquis of Riverdale inspired a hope that he might prove more interesting than the rest—but no; the same nonsense flowed from his lips in the same weary drawl, and Venus and Cupid still did duty for life and love."

Here she arrived at the door of her splendid mansion. The footmen thrust their torches into the extinguishers provided for the purpose, and Lady Millamant stepped from her chair into the lofty hall, and accompanied by her waiting woman, regained the gorgeous suite of apartments she had not long quitted.

There she threw herself into an armchair with a portentous yawn.

"Oh, my lady has the vapours again," cried Prudence, "and to-

night, of all nights in the year, when, on my conscience, she looks ten times more beautiful than ever, and, I dare swear, ten thousand times more beautiful than any other dame or damsel at the fête—and better dressed forsooth! Who else has such a brocade as that—so rich and fanciful! Oh! if I were my lady with dresses and jewels, and love, and lovers by the score, I'll wager I would laugh spleen and vapours away, and be happy from morning till night."

"Prudence, I am sick of dress and jewels, and the assemblies where they shine; and as for love and lovers, the old ones love my wealth, the young ones love themselves. Love indeed!"

"Oh! my lady," cried Prudence, "do not miscall love! If you could only see my cousin Nell and her sweetheart, Roger Blake, who are to be married come Monday next, you'd never say that love was naught."

"Roger and Nell—some rustic party, no doubt. Who are they, girl, that they should feel the love that is but feigned by us?"

"Roger, my lady, is the son of my Lord Faircourt's bailiff, and cousin Nell is uncle Simpson's daughter, one of Squire Woodfield's farmers. Ah! there will be mirth and happiness, and love eno' at that wedding, if only your ladyship could but see it."

"I wonder if the rustics do enjoy themselves, or if 'tis only outward seeming with them too! I have scarcely seen a tree or blade of grass, save in the Park or Spring Garden, for many a year. I go sometimes to Greenwich or to Richmond by the river, it is true; but then one's so beset one scarce looks round. I wonder what the real country may be like, and how the country people feel who never come to town."

"Would your ladyship like to try it? Why should you not go to see my cousin's wedding? It is not far. Four horses would take you there in an hour, although the road is somewhat rough; and how honoured would they feel if your ladyship would but give them your countenance."

"Nay; if I go it shall not be to honour or be honoured. I will be a country lass for the nonce, just to see how it feels. You shall get me a dress, and take me as your friend." And as she spoke the novelty of the idea brought light into her eyes and a ring of gladness into her voice. "Can it be done, think you, Prudence, nobody knowing?"

"Oh! my lady, 'twould be charming," cried Prudence, as delighted with the scheme as her mistress; "just like a play-acting. I will get a dress in which your ladyship will look divine. We will go to the shop of a friend in the city, whom I can trust. You send the carriage home, and we can slip out by the back door, take a hackney-coach to a farm-house near my uncle's, then walk across the fields, and arrive at the merry-making like two countrywomen. Oh! it will be pure! But what will you be called?"

"While I am about it, I will have no less a name than that of the

mother of all living. I will be Eve—Eve Woodley. It was my nurse's name, and seems a friendly one."

"Now, then, to provide a dress for your ladyship. I will about it instantly; there are but three days first."

And so Prudence left the Countess to her repose and much more pleasurable thoughts than she enjoyed before ennui was dissipated by a new idea.

II. Country.

We change the scene to a rural village some five miles from London. Yes, reader, a *rural* village. Incredible as it may seem, in those days there were rural villages so near the metropolis.

In a pretty cottage room we find two young women. In one we recognize at once our old friend Prudence, looking in her best finery a very good specimen of her class; but in the other we certainly should fail to discover anyone we have ever seen before. She is a brilliant brunette of some three or four and twenty summers—a smiling, blushing, beaming beauty. Her face and figure are set off to the best advantage by the most becoming and coquettish of rustic dresses. A chintz gown, all flowered with branching pink roses, is drawn up gracefully over a quilted rose-coloured petticoat; and a little gipsy hat, with a tiny cap beneath it, all trimmed with rose-coloured ribbons, surmounts her magnificent black hair, which, raised on a cushion in front, falls in a profusion of glossy curls behind: altogether as pretty a piece of Dresden china as a collector could wish to place on his shelf, or enshrine in his cabinet.

Who could suppose that in this simple rustic belle he saw a proud court beauty—the magnificent, the capricious, the idolised Countess of Millamant? The difference of hair and complexion are striking enough; but the whole manner and bearing are changed. With her fine clothes she has laid aside fine airs, and now appears a sweet child of nature, joyous, simple, and true.

The fact is, the novelty of her situation and surroundings has imparted new happiness to her mind; and the aspects of nature, from which she has been so long estranged, give reality to her feelings, and life to her movements.

Prudence stood lost in admiration before her. "Surely, surely, my lady, you look more purely handsome than ever you did in your life. No one will have any eyes for the bride, though she's a buxom lassie, and I pity all the lads who look at you."

Lady Millamant affected to chide, but the consciousness of transcendent beauty mantled in her cheek and glanced in her eye, and she walked through the fields to the scene of festivity with a lighter heart and more elastic step than ever she trod the palace floors of St. James's.

On their arrival the merriment was at its height, and it must be owned a prettier picture was never presented to the eye. The richly-wooded landscape wore its best attire in the leafy month of June. The sun shone brightly, birds carolled their sweetest, brooks prattled their loudest, and the perfume of flowers and new-mown hay filled the air, till every sense was charmed.

The picturesque old house was almost covered with creeping plants and climbing roses, and around it, on homely chairs and rustic benches, sat the elders of the village, in sober suits, with calm, yet happy faces, gazing on the scene; while the young people, gaily clad in the picturesque fashion of the day, danced to the sound of the fiddle, or sat beneath the trees, whispering the old, old story, to the music of sighs.

It was, in short, an exceptionally pretty rustic gathering; hosts and guests were alike removed far above poverty, without seeking to aim at gentility—less tempted perhaps to that rather perilous ambition, in those days of comparative little intercourse, than they might be now, when most classes are but a bad imitation of those above them.

The bride and bridegroom especially were unusually interesting; the bride lovely, and the bridegroom loving, as is beseeming; and all the assembly seemed to sympathize with, and rejoice in, their happiness.

Lady Millamant was introduced as a friend, and welcomed with rustic cordiality.

Immediately the country lads, forgetting their sweethearts and their sports, turned to gaze with a mixture of awe and admiration at the travestied Countess, whose wonderful beauty, and an air of grace and refinement which no disguise could conceal, astonished as much as it delighted them; but of all the band, one only stepped forward and approached her. A handsome, strapping young fellow, with a fine shape, and a bright blue eye, which seemed likely to make havoc in the hearts of the fair. His dress was plain, and might have been worn either by a gentleman engaged in country pursuits, or by a gamekeeper or farm bailiff as his Sunday suit. It was, at all events, neat, clean, and becoming, and was worn with an ease and grace that many a man of quality might have envied.

He addressed the stranger, who was for the time being "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." How the rustic swains longed to imitate the self-possession with which he chatted to the beauty. They only dared admire from a distance, whilst he bore her off in triumph to take part in the dance about to begin. Why, they asked one another, should he have a better chance than themselves? He was staying at a small inn in the neighbourhood, with neither servants nor equipage of any kind, passing his time chiefly in fishing, and might reasonably be supposed to be of the same class as themselves; and they grumbled accordingly.

But grumble as they might, they could not but admire, as the pair

floated by. It was the very poetry of motion. Two exceedingly handsome young people, possessed apparently by the same feeling, governed by the same impulse, they danced as though one soul animated both bodies.

And what was passing in their minds the while? Into hers at least we may venture to peep, and I may tell you that the predominant feeling was astonishment at the flood of rapture which seemed to fill her heart

Yes, the tender glances of those bright eyes, blue as a glimpse of Heaven, met for the first time amid the charms of nature, without any meretricious surroundings to divert her attention from their influence, warmed the cold heart of the Countess, as none had ever warmed it before. She seemed to tread on air, and hung upon his words; a happy flush was on her cheek, a happy light within her eyes; and none at that moment could have recognised the cold, capricious Countess of Millamant, who stole so many hearts, and scorned them all.

They talked familiarly, and he told her his name was Ralph Stedman; that he was bailiff to a great lord in the west, and had come there after some horses and hounds for his master, amusing himself meanwhile with fishing. And she, driven to her wits' end for a tale to tell, yet determined not to betray her identity; which, as it seemed to her, would break the spell and dissipate a happy dream; said that she lived with her friend, Prudence May, and plaited straw to make fine ladies' hats, and gained a livelihood as best she might. And so they danced and talked, and looked into each other's eyes, till both were far gone in that sweet delusion which some call love, and some but idle folly. The Countess had forgotten all her airs and affectations, and seemed a sweet child of nature all unspoiled by art; while he, though but a rustic swain, graced by some tincture of manners and refinement, seemed to her one of nature's noblemen; and she cared for naught beside.

"Fair Eve," he said, "would I were Adam for thy sake—fain would I dwell with thee for ever, though Paradise were lost. Say, how shall we meet again. Night is approaching, when we must part. Oh! doubly night, when thou art gone. Tell me where to find thee, or I shall die!"

"Nay, this is overbold; can you expect a modest maiden to give meetings to a man she has seen but once? Oh, fie!"

"Why fie? Not fie at all. We are alike in age, in station, and, as I hope, in temper, and in taste. Most lovely maid, more lovely in thy simple charms than the court belles in their brocades and paint, from the first moment I beheld you, all my heart was thine. Look kindly on my suit. When shall we meet again?"

She thought, "He little knows how unlike I am to what I seem. I must not go;" but she said, "I cannot promise, yet mayhap to-morrow Prudence and I may take an early walk—should the sun but shine—if not, we stay at home in yonder cottage by the stream."

Could anything be plainer? The lover's heart beat high with joy. He thought the prize his own, and was profuse in protestations. But then the Countess, half frightened at her own rashness, called to Prudence; who came unwillingly, loath to quit her own share of the sport; and with many thanks took leave of the worthy folks, whom she had puzzled at least as much as pleased.

Ralph longed to follow her, but fearing by too much eagerness to lose the place in her good graces he had gained, he most reluctantly forbore.

As they walked towards the cottage Prudence expected her lady to be eager to get back to town in time for that night's rout, the hackney coach awaiting them; but no. "I shall not return to-night. Why not sleep here? Your friends sure can keep us one night, and then to-morrow if the sun shines, we will walk down by the river, and listen to the carol of the birds! 'Twill be a pleasant pastime for the nonce."

Prudence was amazed as much as she could be by any new caprice of her capricious mistress; but this also pleased herself. She encouraged her lady in the whim. The hackney-coach was dismissed, charged with a message to my lady's people that she would bide in the country for a time; and the Countess slept that night a sweeter sleep on her rough pallet than ever on her bed of down, and dreamed most blissful dreams, in which one manly form appeared.

The air is fresh, the sky is clear, the green leaves cast a flickering shade, wild-flowers spring up among the grass, sweet sights and sounds are everywhere; but one thing is wanting to make the scene perfection —an Adam to our Eve.

He does not come.

She quite forgets that she has risen with the lark, that 'tis but six o'clock; and who could suppose a maid of any degree, unless obliged by stern necessity, would be afoot at such an hour. Unreasonable woman! She was furious that he was not first at the rendezvous. All the fair landscape took a leaden hue, the birds sang out of tune, the river seemed to stagnate in its course, and, after half an hour's loitering by the stream, indignant and amazed, she proposed to return to the cottage and find some means of going straight to town. Prudence, no way surprised at such sudden change of plans; to which, indeed, she was too well accustomed; turned her steps to go, when suddenly a man sprang through the copse, looked up and down the stream, and, with a cry of joy, advanced towards them; a handsome rustic, with just enough refinement in his air to set his beauty off to best advantage. And now, whether the previous disappointment enhanced the present pleasure I know not, but certain it is that the fair Countess felt a sudden rush of joy no courtly compliment of knight or squire had ever caused. And truly, what are the gratifications of vanity to the raptures of love? Her face beamed with the joy of her heart; and never, perhaps, in all

her life of loveliness, had the Countess of Millamant looked so beautiful as now.

The young man's admiration spoke in his eyes and trembled in his voice; and Prudence, too experienced to need a second glance to tell her how matters stood, discreetly withdrew out of earshot. She thought her lady acting wondrous foolishly, but knew too well how useless would be advice or remonstrance to attempt either; and, indeed, felt herself little fitted to enact the part of Marplot in Love's drama.

The talk between the two flowed on then unrestrained, mingled with loving looks and sly hand-pressures. "How different art thou, fairest Eve, from the fine ladies I see when I go about with my lord, and oh! how much more lovely! 'Tis strange, but thou remindest me of one I've seen but once, who is thought the fairest of them all—and yet what difference! Her face is all one mask of paint and patch; one can scarcely guess what the reality may be beneath. And then her mincing airs might suit a monkey on a vagrant's organ, but not a woman who is to be a wife and mother; whilst thou, O beauteous Eve! art all simplicity and truth. Yet, sooth to say, I see a wondrous likeness."

"And what," cried the Countess, "may be the name of this much praised, and yet much *dis*praised fair one?"

"The Countess of Millamant. All know her. She is the toast of half the town."

She no doubt expected the answer, and yet she coloured, looked confused, and then indignant, and yet half pleased. Did she at once take the lesson to her heart? We cannot tell. She said, "That lady were much flattered could she hear you."

"She would not heed the warning, I tell thee, Eve. I would not wed one of those court ladies had she a queen's dowry."

"Nor I court gallant," cried she, stung to retort. "What are they all? Things made of patches, pads, and perukes. Their brilliancy all in their gold embroidery, their refinement in their lace ruffles, their grace in their red-heeled, diamond-buckled shoes, their brains—but no, what need to find a place for that which is not."

"Heyday, you seem to know them well, and art mighty severe upon them."

The Countess saw she had forgotten her part, and hastened to say, "Oh! I have seen them when I went with my sister to the town, but speak no more of them; speak of ourselves, of this sweet scene, the sunshine, and the flowers, and what to do to-morrow." And so they prattled on, as lovers do, while half-spoken words and sighs filled up the pauses in the talk, till poor Prudence was ready to fling herself into the river with impatience, hunger, and fatigue. But lovers know no such vulgar wants, and it was long ere they resolved to part, with many promises to meet again to-morrow. And so they did. The tryst by the riverside was often renewed in the sweet summer

weather. The Countess lingered on at the cottage, while the temporary eclipse of its brightest luminary filled the town with wonder and regret; and, must we add, with scandal too, for many a tale was invented to fill up the void caused by the lack of real information.

But all must come to an end, even the bliss of lovers. One morning about ten days later, Prudence appeared before her mistress, her face full of excitement, her mouth full of tidings. "Oh! madam, oh! my lady—such news, such glorious news! I give you a month of Sundays to guess it in; but no, you'll never hit upon it. What think you? Our peasant lover, our handsome clown, he is no clown, nor peasant either, no Ralph, no Stedman. He is the famous travelled beau, new to the town—the young Marquis of Riverdale, heir to the dukedom of Broadlands, and the wealth of the Indies besides. His man has just been down at the inn, and told us all! And he——"

But she paused astonished. The lady, instead of being overwhelmed with joy, burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Why, madam, what is this? Have you not understood? He is a man of quality, a nobleman, and you can marry him at once."

"I will not marry him! I waken from a blissful dream to dull reality. He is no better than the rest. What! he's been laughing at me, playing a part intending to deceive a country girl. Where shall I go? I'm sick of the town, now of the country, too. Ah, me! the world is wide, but holds no happiness."

"No happiness! not when I tell you you can wed your heart's choice without reproach or blame? Sure, madam, had he been Ralph Stedman, the bailiff, you never would have sunk so low as to have married him."

"I would, and lived with him, 'mid fields, and trees, and flocks, and cooing doves, for ever and for ever."

"Oh! my lady——"

But she was interrupted by the entrance of the culprit himself.

He entered high in hope, beaming with joy; but instead of the sunshine he expected, beheld a stormy sky. "What," cried my lady, "is it possible you dare appear before me? I am amazed at your audacity."

"Dear love, what is it?"

"What is't, indeed! I know it all—I know your deceit, your falsehood, your base intentions—oh! do not attempt to deny—what else could be between a man of your station and a woman of mine!"

"Alas! I see that some ill-fortune has betrayed my secret before I intended it should be known, but," and he knelt before her, "hear me. It is quite true that when we first met, as I loitered here for fishing in the river, I concealed my rank, thinking to amuse myself at the expense of so fair a maid—what more I thought, or hoped, I will not say; but listen to a penitent. Since I knew you, your sweetness, your purity,

and truth, worthy the highest sphere, all such ideas vanished from my mind; and now I offer you my hand as well as heart, my rank, my name, and fortune, only too proud to call you mine, if you will have me. Sweetheart, answer me."

"Oh! my lord, my generous, noble lord, my every hope and wish is now fulfilled—I have met with one to love, and worthy of my love! But hold!" She paused, and mischief sparkled in her eye. "Alas your generosity is all in vain. It cannot be. Eve cannot marry you, you are too far above her."

"Oh! do not say it; you are above me as far as one human being can be above another. Oh! Eve, my love!"

"Now stay. I said Eve could not marry you; but suppose that Eve is naught—suppose in place of her you see a vain court beauty, the very vainest and most frivolous of all that vain and foolish throng, one whom you would not wed had she an angel's beauty, and the dowry of a queen? Alas! alas! that it should be so."

"Why, what means this? Who are you, then?"

"I am that thing of paint and patches, of airs and affectations—the Countess Millamant—you would not wed her. Eve cannot marry you. What's to be done?"

"You are the Countess Millamant! Then I was right. I saw the likeness through the change of dress. Oh! more dear than ever! I know you now. What I then saw was but a mask concealing the most lovely thing on earth!"

And then—must it be owned—these two high personages kissed and hugged each other, as though they were but the rustic pair they had seemed.

What more is there to tell? Prudence and all the town were regaled with a brilliant wedding, and the lovely Marchioness of Riverdale still sometimes deigned to reign as queen of fashion, though with a different court.

They spent the greater part of their time in the country, surrounded by contented dependants and a growing family: showing by their example that moderation in all things is the best road to happiness.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

"They are all so helpless!" murmured Edina.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXII.

WORSE THAN PEAS AND HORSEHAIR.

MAJOR RAYNOR sat in his favourite seat on the lawn at Eagles' Nest, at drowsy peace with himself and with the world. Of late, the Major had always been drowsy: morning, noon, and night, no matter what company he was in, he might be seen nodding with closed eyelids. Frank, as a medical man, did not like the signs. He spoke to his uncle of the necessity of arousing himself, of taking more exercise, of indulging somewhat less in the good luncheons and dinners. The Major made an effort to obey: for two days he actually walked about the lawn for twenty minutes, refused two rich entrées, took at each meal one glass less of wine. But the efforts ended there, and on the third day the Major gave reformation up as a bad job.

"It's of no use, Frank, my boy. You young folks can be upon the run all day if you choose, and live upon bread and cheese and table beer; but we old ones require ease: we can't be put about."

So the Major sat at ease this day as usual, lazily thinking, and dropping into a semi-doze. A letter had been received that morning from Edina, in answer to an invitation from Major and Mrs. Raynor to come and make her home with them now she was alone in the world. Edina declined it for the present. She was staying at Trennach parsonage with Mr. and Mrs. Pine: her plans were not decided upon; but the clergyman and his wife would not yet spare her. She had many affairs to settle at Trennach. Mr. Hatman had taken to the practice, as it was arranged he should do, and to the

house; but Edina could not leave the place at present. She hoped to pay Eagles' Nest a visit in the course of the summer.

Thinking of this, and subsiding into the semi-doze, sat the Major. The hum of the insects sounded in his ears, the scent of the rich flowering hawthorn was heavy in the air. Though not yet summer by the calendar, for May was reigning, the season was unusually premature, and the weather was, to all intents and purposes, that of summer. Bees were sipping at the honey blossoms, butterflies fluttered from flower to flower. All nature seemed to conduce to repose, and—the Major was soon fast asleep, and choking as though he were being strangled.

"You are wanted, if you please, sir."

The words aroused him. Opening his eyes, and sitting upright in his chair, he saw his butler by his side.

"What do you say, Lamb? Wanted? Who is it?"

"Sir Philip Stane, sir. He is in the drawing-room."

The Major took a draught of his champagne cup, standing on the table by his side. Which cup, it must be confessed, was much more innocent than its name would imply. A quart or two of it would not hurt anybody: and the Major was always thirsty. Crossing the lawn, he went into the drawing-room. Sir Philip Stane, a little man with a white shirt-frill, a cold face, and a remarkably composed manner, rose at his entrance. Major Raynor shook hands with him in his hearty way, and they sat down together.

For some few minutes the conversation turned on general topics; but soon the Knight gave the Major to understand that he had come to speak upon a particular subject: the attachment of his son to Miss Raynor.

"It has for some time been observable that they are thinking of one another," remarked he.

"Well, yes, I suppose it has," said the Major. "We have noticed it here."

"William is getting on fairly well; he calculates that he will make at least seven hundred pounds this year. Quite enough, he thinks, to begin housekeeping upon, with help. With help, Major."

"I should have thought it just unbounded riches in my young days," observed the Major.

"William considers that he would be justified in setting up a home, provided he can be met," continued Sir Philip in his deliberate, sententious way, presenting a very contrast to the Major's impulsive heartiness. "Young people do not of course expect to begin as they may hope to end: riches must come by degrees."

"Quite right," said the Major.

"And therefore, with a view to the consideration of the matter—to finally deciding whether my son may be justified, or not, in settling

this year, I have come to ask you, Major Raynor, what portion you intend to bestow upon your daughter."

"Not any," replied the plain-speaking Major. "I have none to bestow."

Sir Philip looked at him blankly. He appeared not to understand.

"My will is good, Sir Philip. I'd give a portion to Alice heartily if I had it to give. Thousands, I'm sure, the young people should be welcome to, if they needed it."

"Do you mean to say that you—that you will not bestow any portion whatever upon your daughter when she marries?" asked Sir Philip, in a tone of cold astonishment.

"I'm sorry that I can't do it," said the Major. "I wish I could."

"Then, I am afraid, I—cannot say what I had come to say," returned Sir Philip with the air of a man who deliberates aloud. "I could not advise my son to settle upon the few hundreds a year that make up his present income."

"Why, it's plenty," cried the candid Major. "You have just said yourself that young people cannot expect to begin as they will end. Your son's is a rising income: if he makes seven hundred this year, he may expect to make ten next, and double the seven the year after. It is ample to begin upon, Sir Philip."

"No," dissented Sir Philip. "Neither he nor I would consider it so. Something should be put by for a rainy day. This communication has completely taken me by surprise, Major Raynor. We took it for granted that your daughter would at least add her quota to the income: had it been but three or four hundred a year. Without money of her own, there could be no settlement on her, you see, my son's not being real property."

The Major was growing a little heated. He did not at all like the turn the conversation was taking, or Sir Philip's dictatorial tone.

"Well, you hear, Sir Philip, that Alice has nothing. Those who wish to take her must take her as she is—portionless—or not at all."

"Sir Philip Stane rose. "I am sorry then, Major, that I cannot ask what I was about to ask—for *her*. Your daughter ——"

"You are not wanted to ask it, sir," hotly interrupted the Major.

"The fact of your daughter's being portionless debars it," quietly went on the Knight. "I am very sorry indeed to have troubled you, and subjected myself to pain. William must consider his pretensions at an end."

"They are at an end," fired the Major. "If it is money he has been thinking of all this while, he ought to be ashamed of himself for a calculating, mercenary young rascal. Were he to come to me, on his knees, after this, begging for my daughter, he should not have her. That's my answer, Sir Philip Stane, and you can take it away with you."

The Major's peal of the bell echoed through the house. But

Sir Philip Stane's hand was already on the door handle, letting himself out with a short "good morning."

Away went the Major, hunting for Alice. He found her with her mother. Hotly and explosively he gave an account of the interview: of what he called the mercenary conduct of Sir Philip and William Stane. Poor Alice turned hot and cold; flushed red and white by turns. She took up the indignity—as she was pleased to think it—quite as resentfully as the Major.

"I forbid you to have anything to do with him after this, Alice. I forbid you to see him more."

"You need not forbid me, papa," was the answer. "I should not think of it."

Major Raynor was one who could not keep in anything, good or bad, especially any grievance. He went about the house looking for Charles and Frank, that he might impart the news and so let off a little of his superfluous anger. But he could not find either of them.

Matters, during the past two or three weeks, had been going on as usual. Daisy was progressing so far towards recovery that she could sit at the open window of her chamber and revel in the balmy air, while feasting her eyes with the beauteous landscape. Charles was in a little extra trouble; for he had been written to twice upon the subject of the fifty pound bill that was over-due. And Frank, outwardly gay as the flowers of May, was inwardly on thorns and nettles.

That that mysterious personage, the Tiger, was wasting his days and his hours at Grassmere on Frank Raynor's account, Frank felt persuaded of. To him it seemed a fact indisputable. The man did not molest him; he did not appear to take particular notice of him; he had not yet accosted him: but Frank knew that all the while he was craftily watching his movements, to see that he did not escape. In fact, he knew that the Tiger was the spy of Blase Pellet.

The espionage was growing intolerable to Frank. And on this very day, just about the time that Sir Philip Stane was at Eagles' Nest, he flung prudence to the winds, and questioned the enemy. The Tiger had wandered as near to the house as he could go without being guilty of a positive trespass: and Frank, chancing to turn out of what was called the Beach walk, came upon him face to face. It was the first time they had thus closely met. For a full minute they gazed at each other. The Tiger stood his ground, and quietly took from his pocket a small note-case of brown morocco leather, with the initials "C. R." stamped upon it in gilt.

"Does this belong to you?" questioned the Tiger.

"Not to me," replied Frank. "But I believe it belongs to my cousin, Mr. Raynor."

"I picked it up a few minutes ago as I was strolling along. Perhaps you will be so good as give it to its owner."

Frank took the case from the Tiger, and thanked him. Even to this man, suspecting him, as he did, for a despicable spy, he could but be courteous. And indeed, but for the suspicion, Frank would have rather liked the man's face, now he saw it closely; the thought passed through his mind that, for a Tiger, he was a civilized one. There was a tone of pleasant freedom in the voice; the dark grey eyes, gazing steadily into Frank's, were earnest and steady.

"You come from Trennach," said Frank suddenly, speaking upon impulse.

"From Trennach?" repeated the stranger, vaguely, and evincing no surprise.

"Or from some one there," continued Frank. "Employed by him to—to look after his villainous interests here."

"I am my own employer, young man."

"What is your name, pray?"

"If I thought it concerned you to know it, I might perhaps inform you," was the answer, civilly delivered.

"But suppose it does concern me?"

"'Tis my opinion it does not."

"At any rate your business here does."

"Does it?"

"Will you deny that you have business here? Business of a private nature?"

"I cannot deny that; for it is true."

"And that your business consists in peeping, and watching, and spying?"

"You are partly right."

"And," continued Frank, growing warm, "don't you think that to peep and to spy is a despicable proceeding?"

"In some cases it may undoubtedly be so regarded," was the calm, cool answer. "In other cases it is perfectly justifiable. When some end, for instance, has to be obtained: or, let us say, a problem worked out!"

"The Devil can quote Scripture, we are told, to serve his own purposes," muttered Frank to himself as he turned away: afraid of pursuing the subject; half afraid of what revelation the man might make, and of his fearless grey eyes and their steadfast gaze.

They strode apart from one another at right angles. The stranger with careless, easy steps, with profound composure; Frank less easy than usual.

"I wonder," soliloquised he, "whether Pellet has let him into that unhappy night's secrets, or whether he has but given him general instructions to look after me, and has kept him in the dark? Any way, I wish Blase Pellet was ——"

The wish, whatever it might have been, was left unspoken. For the

Tiger had changed his course. Had turned to follow Frank at a fleet pace, and now came up with him.

"Will you tell me, sir, what induced you to assume that I had come here from Trennach? And for what purpose I am 'spying?'—and upon whom?"

"There's no need to tell you," rejoined Frank. "You know too well already."

"Suppose I tell you I do not know?"

"I hope you don't: it's all the same," returned Frank indifferently, believing he was being played with.

"Perhaps you have run up debts at Trennach, and are mistaking me for a sheriff's officer?" proceeded the Tiger, once more gazing steadfastly at Frank as he spoke. "Your cousin, the Major's son, has been taking me for one."

"How on earth did he get to know that?" thought Frank. And it seemed to be so confirmatory a proof of the Tiger's accomplishments in the prying line, that Frank felt as much exasperated as his sweet-tempered nature could allow him to feel.

"Your way lies that way, and mine this," spoke Frank, with a commanding wave of the hand. "Good morning."

The Tiger stood still, looking after his receding footsteps. A very peculiar expression sat on his face, not altogether complimentary to Frank.

"A curious lot, these Raynors," concluded he to himself, as he turned to pursue his own way.

It was perhaps rather remarkable that Charles Raynor should also on this same day be brought into speaking contact with the Tiger for the first time. Charley's troubles were culminating to a point: at least, in-so-far as that he was about to be pressed for one of his debts, though he knew it not. It would come upon Charley something like a shock. Since fear, on the score of the Tiger, had subsided, he had enjoyed a complete immunity from personal annoyance; and this had lulled his apprehensions to rest; so that he went about here, there, and everywhere, feeling free as air.

He had been out in the dog-cart all the morning. Upon going indoors on his return, by the entrance that was nearest to the stables, he, in passing the butler's pantry, saw Lamb standing in it. The man made a sudden movement as though he would speak with him, and it arrested Charley.

"Do you want me, Lamb?" he asked, halting to put the question.

Lamb dropped his voice to a mysterious whisper, and Charley instinctively moved inside, and shut the door behind him. Lamb knew nearly as much about his young master's embarrassments as he himself knew.

"A party has been here this morning who wanted to see you, Mr.

Charles. When I said you were out—gone up to London, I thought —he seemed as if he'd hardly believe me. I began to think I shouldn't get rid of him."

"Who was it?" asked Charles.

"It was a respectable looking man, sir. Highly respectable, one might be tempted to call him, if his errand had not been to bother for money. Being near the neighbourhood, he had turned aside to Grassmere to see you, he said, and his business with you was particular. Of course I knew what it all meant, Mr. Charles, and I declared you were out for the day and couldn't be seen though he waited till night."

"I wonder which of them it was?" mused Charley. "Did he give his name?"

"Yes, sir: Huddles. He ——"

"Oh, Huddles, is it," interrupted Charley, his mouth falling. "I'm glad I didn't see him. Is he gone for good, do you think, Lamb?"

"I should say so, sir. I fully impressed upon him that his waiting would be of no earthly use. I even said, Mr. Charles, that there was no answering for your return when you went to London, and that you might be there a week, for all I could say. I told him he had better write to you, Mr. Charles. 'Very well,' he said in answer, and went off with a rapid step: no doubt to catch the next train."

"That's all right then," said Charley, completely reassured. "Any visitors been here, Lamb?"

"Sir Philip Stane called, sir. And some ladies are in the drawing-room now. Would you like some refreshment, Mr. Charles?"

"No, I'll wait till dinner time."

But it wanted some two or three hours to dinner time yet. Presently Charles went strolling out on foot, digesting the unpleasant item of news that his father had just hastened to impart to him—the sneaking behaviour (as he called it) of William Stane. Charles felt greatly vexed and annoyed at it for Alice's sake. He was sure there was a mutual attachment, and had believed that they understood each other.

Lost in reflections on this subject, and never giving as much as a thought to the matter imparted to him by Lamb, his eyes never raised, his footsteps wandering on almost as they would, Charley found himself passing along the common, on the side of the bettermost houses. Some words of salutation greeted him.

"Good afternoon, sir. A hot day again, is it not?"

They came from Miss Jetty, the carpenter's sister. She was sitting at work at her open window. Charles lifted his eyes to nod to her; and that enabled him to see some one who was approaching at a short distance. *Huddles.* Charley recognised him; and on the spur of the moment, he darted into the carpenter's to hide himself.

"I hope and trust he did not see me!"

But Mr. Huddles did see him. Mr. Huddles came up with a long stride, and was inside the house almost as soon as Charley was. Charley could not pretend to be blind then. He stood just within Esther Jetty's sitting-room; and the applicant stood in the passage facing him.

"I called at Eagles' Nest to-day, Mr. Charles Raynor, and could not see you. You know of course what it was I wanted?"

Charles was taken to. What with the unpleasantness of the surprise, what with the consciousness of the helpless state of his finances, and what with the proximity of Miss Esther Jetty's eyes and ears, raised in curiosity, he was turning frightfully cross. A few sharp, haughty words greeted Huddles, apparently causing him astonishment. This application concerned one of the two "bills" given by Charley; the one on which no proceedings had as yet been taken.

"Can you meet that bill, Mr. Charles Raynor?"

"No, I can't," replied Charles. "I wrote you word that I would meet it as soon as I could; that bill and the other also; and so I will. You must wait."

"For how long, Mr. Raynor? It is inconvenient to wait."

Charles flew into a passion. But for Esther Jetty's presence, he would have managed much better; that of course behoved him to carry matters with a high hand, and he showered some abuse on Mr. Huddles in haughty language, forgetful of diplomacy. Mr. Huddles, not at all the right sort of man to be dealt with in this manner, repaid him in his own coin. Had Charles met him civilly, he would have been civil; ay, and forbearing. The bills—he held them both—had only come into his hands in the course of business. He was really respectable, both as a man and a tradesman, not accustomed to be spoken to in such a fashion, and most certainly in this instance not deserving to be. His temper rose. A short, sharp storm of words ensued, and Mr. Huddles went out of the house in anger, leaving a promise behind him.

"I have been holding the two bills over for you, Mr. Charles Raynor, and staying proceedings out of consideration for you and at your request. And this is the gratitude I get! The affair is none of mine, as you know; and what I have done has been simply out of good nature, for I was sorry to see so young a man in danger of exposure, perhaps of a debtors' prison. I will not delay the proceedings another day. The bills shall pass out of my hands, and you must do the best you can for yourself."

While Charles stood, knitting his brow and looking very foolish, staring at the front door, which still vibrated with the bang Mr. Huddles gave it, and not half liking to turn round to face Esther Jetty, the parlour door in front of him on the other side the passage

opened, and the Tiger appeared at it. He must have been an ear-witness to the whole. It did not tend to decrease Charley's annoyance: and, in truth, the sudden appearance of this man upon the scene revived all Charles's suspicions of him. The Tiger's face wore quite a benevolent aspect.

"Can I be of any use to you?" he asked. "I will be if I can. Step in here, Charles Raynor, and let us talk it over."

Charley lost his head. The words only added fuel to fire. Coming from this sneak of a sheriff's officer, or whatever other disreputable thing he might be, they sounded in his ears in the light of an insult —a bit of casuistry designed to entrap him. And he treated them accordingly.

"*You* be of use to me!" he scornfully retorted with all the scorn he could call up. "Mind your own business, man, if you can. Don't presume to interfere with mine."

And out of the house strode Charley, banging the door in his turn, and sending a good afternoon to Esther Jetty through the open window. The Tiger shrugged his shoulders with a contemptuous gesture: as much as to say that the young man was not worth a thought and he washed his hands of him and his concerns. Taking up his slouching hat, he put it well over his brows, stood for a few minutes at the outer door, and then passed through the little gate.

"Wouldn't you like your tea, sir?" called out Esther Jetty from the window. "I was just about to get it."

"Presently," replied the Tiger.

Meanwhile Charles Raynor was striding towards home, full of bitter repentance. All the folly of his recent conduct was presenting itself before him.

"I wish I had met the fellow differently!" he cried, alluding to Huddles. "There'll be no more staving-off now. A day or two, and they'll be down upon me. I think I was a fool! What a to-do there'll be at home! How on earth will the money be found?—and what will be the upshot?"

Indeed, it seemed that, with one thing and another, Eagles' nest was not altogether comfortable. Most of its inmates had some secret trouble to try them. And yet it was not twelve months since they had entered upon it, all glee and joy, believing their days there would be delightful as in a second Paradise!

The next afternoon but one, Saturday, brought William Stane. Alice chanced to be in the shrubbery, and met him. His countenance proved that he felt vexed, doubtful, ill at ease. Instead of the tender glance and smile that had been wont to greet Alice, he had a grave eye and knitted brow. The look angered her, even more than had the reported words of Sir Philip on the Thursday before.

What precisely passed between them perhaps neither could afterwards clearly recall. He said something about how sorry he was that their happy intercourse should have been marred; Alice interrupted him with a sharp and haughty word. William Stane retorted; and things were spoken between them, in the moment's anger, that could neither be unsaid nor qualified. Prejudiced by his father's account of the unsatisfactory interview with the Major, he had come, naturally inclined to espouse his father's side; Alice on her part upheld their own. Very short indeed was the scene, but it was a decisive one.

"I am sorry to have been so mistaken in you, Miss Raynor," he said, turning to depart. "No great harm has, however, been done."

"None," returned Alice. "Fare you well."

He raised his hat without speaking, and the echoes of his retreating footsteps died away in the shrubbery.

Thus they parted. The fault being at least as much Alice's as his. Whether he had come to smooth matters, to repudiate the fiat Sir Philip had pronounced, Alice knew not, but she did not allow him the opportunity. If the possession of Eagles' Nest had taught nothing else to Major Raynor's children, it had certainly taught them self-arrogance. The world seemed made for them, and for them alone.

Alice went upstairs humming a gay song, and passed into Daisy's room. She halted at the glass, glancing at her pretty face, at the brightness of the blue eyes, at the unusual colour on her cheeks, and touching here and there her light brown hair. Frank's wife turned round.

"You are gay this afternoon, Alice."

"Gay as a fairy," replied Alice. "It is lovely out of doors. The sun's shining and the birds are singing."

A few days went on. Charley was in a state of inward collapse. For, not one single minute in those days came and passed, but he was looking out for some dreadful shock, emanating from the enemy, Huddles. Each night, as the dusk fell, he felt not at all thankful that the blow had kept off, concluding that the morrow would bring it. Sometimes he wished he lived in the old days of barbarism and pilgrimages; that he might follow the fashion and set out to some distant holy shrine, with hard peas in his shoes and fretting horsehair next his skin. The peas and the horsehair would be pleasant, in comparison with this mental torment and suspense.

Alice continued gay; gay as a lark. Was it put on, this gaiety, or was it real? Perhaps she herself did not know.

"You could not have cared much for William Stane, Alice, or he for you," one day remarked her mother, to whom the affair had given pain, interrupting Alice in the carolling of a song, sung to an impromptu dance.

"Cared for him, mamma!" she returned in her spirit of bravado. "I am well rid of him."

Mrs. Raynor sighed. Alice had so changed: not, she feared, for the better. So had Charles. Good fortune had ruined them all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STARTLING TIDINGS.

THE first of June. A day destined to be an eventful one at Eagles' Nest. At five o'clock in the morning the house was aroused from its peaceful slumbers by a commotion. Mrs. Raynor's bell was ringing violently; Mrs. Raynor's voice was calling for help in loud and anxious tones. Major Raynor had been taken ill.

Frank was the first at the bed side. His uncle lay unconscious, or partly so, exhibiting alarming symptoms. An attack of some kind seemed imminent; Frank thought it would be apoplexy. Other advice was sent for.

Long before the usual hour for breakfast, breakfast had been taken, and the family hardly knew what to do with themselves. Dr. Selfe, a clever man, residing near, had seen Major Raynor—who now seemed to be somewhat better. The doctor quite agreed with Frank that the symptoms were indicative of apoplexy; but he thought that it might be staved off, at least for the present, by the aid of powerful remedies. These remedies had been applied, and the patient was decidedly improving. He did not speak much, but was quite conscious. On these occasions, when one out of the home circle is lying upstairs in sudden and most dangerous illness, the house is utterly unsettled. Habits and customs are changed; nobody knows what to be at.

"I shall have some more coffee," said Charles, ringing the bell. "There's nothing else to do."

Lamb came in and received the order—some hot coffee. The breakfast things were still on the table. This was one of the pleasantest rooms in the house: small and cosy, with glass doors opening to the garden. It faced the west, so was free from the morning sun: but, beyond the shade cast by the house, that sun shone brightly on the smooth green grass, on the clustering flowers of many colours. The chairs, curtains, and carpet of the room were purple. Mrs. Raynor's little work-table stood in one nook, opposite to it was a low open bookcase. The chimney-piece was low and modern, its hearth was filled with ferns, its large glass reflected the room and its furniture. Frank, standing close, could see in it the breakfast table and its contents, with the stand of fresh flowers in the middle.

While waiting for the coffee, which had to be made, Charles leaned against the side of the window, half indoors, half out, whistling softly

and keeping a good look out around, lest any Philistine should approach him unawares. This illness of his father's complicated matters frightfully. In the midst of Charley's worst apprehensions there had lain, down deep in his heart, a vista of possible refuge. He had been wont to whisper to himself, "When things come to a crisis, my father will no doubt find a way to help me;" and the hope had been to his spirit as so much healing balm. But his father, lying in this state, could not be applied to: his repose of mind must not be disturbed: and if Charley fell into some tiger's clutches now, what on earth was he to do?

Whistling, softly and unconsciously, a dolorous tune, Charley indulged in these highly agreeable reflections. His mother had not come down stairs at all. Alice had gone up to Daisy: Kate and Mademoiselle were reading French under the distant walnut tree. Only Frank was there.

"I do think I can smell haymaking!" cried Charley suddenly.

"Yes," assented Frank. "Some fields are down."

"Is it not early for it?"

"We have had an early season."

No more was said. There flashed into Charley's mind a remembrance of the day he had first seen Eagles' Nest: when he had stood at one of the windows, though not this one, gazing out at the charming scenery, at the lovely flowers; inhaling their perfume, and that of the new-mown hay. Association of ideas is potent, and probably that scent of the hay had brought the day to his memory now. Barely a twelvemonth had passed since then: and yet—how anticipations had changed! He had believed then that perfect peace, ease, prosperity must inevitably attend them as the possessors of Eagles' Nest: he remembered picturing to himself the calamity it would have been had the beautiful place passed into others' hands. But he had lived to learn that care and worry could penetrate even there.

"There's the postman!" cried Charley. And glad, probably, of the interruption to his thoughts, he went out, and crossed the lawn to meet the man.

"Only one letter this morning," he exclaimed, coming back, with his eyes fixed on it. "I say, Frank, what is to be done? It is from old Street, and he has put 'immediate' on it."

"You had better open the letter yourself, I should say, Charles: my uncle cannot," said Frank decisively.

"I wonder what he has to write about: it is not often we hear from him. Nothing particular, I daresay: the good old father has not, I am sure, a secret in the world. Or—do you think," added Charley, his face lighting with eager hope, "that the money can have turned up? What a glorious thought! Yes, I will open it."

He broke the seal of the lawyer's letter. At that moment Lamb came in with the fresh coffee. Frank, still standing by the mantel-

piece, watched the man put it down; he stayed to set two or three things in order on the table before he went out again. As the door closed, Frank's glance chanced to stray to Charley's face.

What was the matter with it? The eager flush of hope had been succeeded by a look of dismay: nay, almost of horror. The letter seemed to be very short. Charley was reading it twice over, growing paler all the while.

"Can it be a hoax?" he cried, in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper, as he held the letter out. "It cannot be true."

Frank took the letter. There was no help for it. But a spasm seized on his own face, and a very terrible spasm seized upon his heart. When we are nourishing some great dread, any new and unexplained event seems to bear upon it. His fears had flown back to that dreadful night at Trennach.

But the letter proved not to be connected with that. The news it brought was of a nature perfectly open and tangible. Frank's own fears gave place to consternation and dismay as he read the lawyer's words: dismay for his uncle's sake.

"My dear sir,

"I have just heard a very painful rumour, and I think it my duty to communicate it to you. It is said that the will, under which you succeeded to Mrs. Atkinson's estate, proves to have been worthless; a fresh will having been discovered. By this later will, it is Mr. George Atkinson who inherits Eagles' Nest. My information is, I fear, authentic; but I do not yet know particulars.

"This is but a brief note to convey such tidings, but the evening post is on the point of going out, and I do not wish to lose it. I would have run down, instead of writing, but am not equal to it, having for the past week or two been confined to the house.

"Believe me, dear sir,

"Sincerely yours,

"Major Raynor. "JOHN STREET."

They stood looking at one another, Charles and Frank, with questioning eyes and dismayed faces. Could it be true? No, surely it could not be. Street the lawyer, in spite of the boasted authenticity of his information, must have been misinformed.

So thought, so spoke Charles. "You see," cried he, "he speaks of it at first as but a rumour."

But Frank, in spite of his sanguine nature, regarded the information differently. He began looking at portions of the letter again, and did not answer.

"Can't you speak, Frank?"

"Charley, I fear it is true. Street would never have written this dismal news to your father while there was any doubt about it."

"But it has no right to be true; it ought not to be true," disputed Charley in his dreadful perplexity. "Who is George Atkinson that he should inherit Eagles' Nest? The fellow lives at the other end of the world. In Australia, or somewhere. Frank, it's not *likely*. It would be a frightful injustice; a cruel shame. It has been ours for twelve months; who will wrest it from us now?"

And truly, having enjoyed Eagles' Nest for all that while, regarding it as theirs, living at it in perfect security, it did appear to be a most improbable thing that it should now pass away from them; almost an impossibility.

"Charley, we must keep this letter to ourselves until we know more. I am almost glad my uncle is ill; it would have shocked him so——"

"And how long will it be before we do know more?" broke in Charles, who was in a humour for finding fault with everybody, especially the lawyer. "Street ought to have come down, no matter at what inconvenience. A pretty state of suspense, this, to be placed in!"

"Drink your coffee, Charley."

"Coffee? Oh, I don't want it now."

The unfortunate news left Charles no inclination for coffee. Of all the calamities, falling or threatened, that had been making him so uneasy, this was the worst. The worst? The rest were but as light mishaps in the balance. Frank, with all his sunny-heartedness, could impart no comfort. The only possible ray of comfort to be discerned lay in the hope that the tidings would turn out not to be true. A hope which grew fainter with every minute's thought.

To remain in this suspense was nothing less than torture. It was hastily decided between them that Frank should go up to town, see Mr. Street, and learn more. He had no scruple in doing this: Major Raynor was decidedly better; in no immediate danger, as Frank believed; and Dr. Selfe was close at hand in case of need.

Frank lost no time; hastening to the station, and looking in on Dr. Selfe on his way, to explain that important business was calling him for a few hours to London. Mr. Street's residence was near Euston Square, and his offices were in the same house. The morning was well advanced when Frank got there and was shown into the lawyer's presence. He seemed to look less genial than of yore, as he sat sideways at a table covered with papers, his right foot on a rest: his hair was certainly more scanty; his light eyes, seen so clearly through his spectacles, were colder. Frank, who, as it chanced, had never seen him, thought what a hard little man he looked.

"Ah, yes; a sad affair," he remarked, as Frank in a few words introduced himself and his business. "Very embarrassing for the Major."

"But I should hope it cannot be true, Mr. Street?"

"That what cannot be true?—that there's a later will in existence?

Oh, that is true enough. And the Major has got an attack, you say? Misfortunes never come alone."

"May I ask how the fact—that there's a later will—has come to your knowledge?"

Mr. Street turned over a few of the papers on the table, and took up a letter from amidst them. "I had this note from my brother the banker yesterday afternoon," he said, running his eyes over it. "It tells me that a will, of later date than the one by which Major Raynor holds Eagles' Nest, has been produced, leaving the estate to Mr. George Atkinson. George Atkinson is on his homeward voyage now from Australia, to take possession of the property."

"What a mercy if the ship should go down with him!" thought Frank in his dismay, as the faint remnant of hope died out. "You—I presume you consider that this unpleasant report may be relied on then, Mr. Street?"

"Certainly it may. My brother is one of the most cautious men living; he would not have written in this decisive way"—touching the note with his finger—"had there existed any doubt. Most likely he has heard from George Atkinson himself. Atkinson is virtually his partner, you know, and head of the bank. I had thought my brother would, perhaps, call here last night, but he did not. Something or other has come to my ankle, and I can't get out."

"Then—this note from Mr. Edwin Street is all the information you as yet possess?"

"That's all. But I know it is to be relied on. I thought it better to write at once and acquaint the Major: he will have little time, as it is, to prepare for the change and see what can be done."

Frank rose. "I will go down and question Mr. Edwin Street," he said. "I suppose I am at liberty to do so?"

"Oh, quite at liberty," was the reply. "He no doubt wrote to me with the view that I should prepare your family, Mr. Raynor. You will find him at the bank."

The banker received Frank coldly; he seemed to be just the same hard, ungenial, self-contained kind of man that his brother was. Harder, in fact. This was indeed his general manner: but somehow Frank took up the idea that he had a dislike to the name of Raynor.

"I beg to refer you to Callard and Prestleigh, Mr. Atkinson's solicitors," spoke the banker to Frank, as soon as the latter entered on his business. "They will be able to afford you every necessary information."

"But won't you tell me how it has all come about?" cried Frank, his genial manner presenting a contrast to that of the banker. "If Mrs. Atkinson did make a later will, where has the will been all this while? Why should it turn up at a twelvemonth's end, and not at the time of her death?"

"The will, as I am informed, has been lying for some time in the hands of Callard and Prestleigh."

"Then why did Callard and Prestleigh not produce it at the proper time?" reiterated Frank.

"Callard and Prestleigh may themselves be able to inform you," was the short, stiff answer.

Apparently no satisfaction could be extracted from Mr. Edwin Street; and Frank betook himself to Callard and Prestleigh, who lived near the Temple. "From pillar to post, from post to pillar," thought he. "I ought to come at something presently."

Mr. Callard was a white-haired old gentleman; a little reserved in manner also; but nevertheless sufficiently cordial with Frank, and did not object to give him information. He took him for the son of Major Raynor; and though Frank twice set him right upon the point, the old man went back to his own impression, and persisted in thinking Frank to be the (late) heir to Eagles' Nest. It was a mistake of no consequence.

The reader may remember that when Mrs. Atkinson expressed her intention of making a fresh will in Mr. George Atkinson's favour and leaving Major Raynor's name out of it, she had summoned Street the lawyer to Eagles' Nest to draw it up. Street (as he subsequently informed the Major) had represented the injustice of this to Mrs. Atkinson, and prevailed upon her (as he supposed) to renounce her intention, and to let the old will stand. He went back to London in this belief, and nothing whatever occurred, then or subsequently, to shake it. However, after his departure from Eagles' Nest, it appeared that Mrs. Atkinson had sent for a local solicitor, and caused him to draw up a fresh will, in which she made George Atkinson her heir, and cut off the Major. This will she had kept by her until just before her death, when she sent it, sealed up, to Callard and Prestleigh, requesting them to put it amid Mr. George Atkinson's papers, and hold it at his disposal. There could be no doubt that she also, either at this same time or close upon her death, wrote to George Atkinson and informed him of what she had done: namely, made her will in his favour and placed the will with his solicitors.

"But, sir," exclaimed Frank to Mr. Callard, when he had listened to this explanation, "how was it that you did not bring the will forward at Mrs. Atkinson's death? Why did you suffer the other will to be proved and acted on, when you knew you held this one?"

"But we did not know it," replied the old man: "you have misunderstood me, my young friend. When Mrs. Atkinson sent the document to us she did not inform us what it was. I assure you we never suspected it was a will. It was sealed up in a parchment envelope, and there was no guide to indicate what the contents might be."

"Then—how do you know it now?"

"Because we have received written instructions from Mr. George Atkinson to open the parchment, and prove the will."

"Is it opened?—Have you seen the will?" hastily asked Frank.

"Both seen it, and read it," replied the old man, stroking back his smooth white hair, and looking at Frank with concern. "It will be proved in a day or two. I sympathise with you and your father."

"Who are the executors?"

"George Atkinson and Street the banker. It is the latter who is acting."

"Mr. Atkinson is, I hear, on his way from Australia."

"Yes: by ship. We expect him to land in the course of a week or two. His written instructions were received by this last mail, and were conveyed to us through Edwin Street, to whom they were sent. Mr. Atkinson desires that all necessary preliminaries may be executed without delay, as he intends to take possession of Eagles' Nest on his arrival."

"He cannot know that my uncle is in it!"

"I daresay he does. He knew that Major Raynor succeeded to it, for we wrote him to that effect at the time. And he is in regular correspondence with his partner, Edwin Street."

"Then it is all true; the worst is true!" cried Frank, as the full import of what this meant for the poor Major and his family became more and more apparent. "I *wonder* that George Atkinson should accept the estate!—should wrest it from them! From what little I have heard of him—it has not been much—I drew the conclusion that he was a kind and a just man."

Mr. Solicitor Callard opened his eyes very widely. The words surprised him. "Kind! Just!" cried he. "Well, so he is: we know him well: but, my good young sir, a will is a will. You can't ignore a will as you might a spoken message."

"It will be a terrible shock to my uncle and his family. Utter ruin."

The old gentleman shook his head in pity. "Ay, it's sad, no doubt; very. We lawyers often have to inflict grievous blows: and we cannot help ourselves."

"One last question," said Frank, as he prepared to leave. "In the old will, Major Raynor was left residuary legatee, and therefore came in for all the accumulated money—though in point of fact the bulk of it has not yet been found. Who comes in for it now?"

"George Atkinson. My good young friend, George Atkinson comes in for *everything*. The one will may almost be called a counterpart of the other; in regard to the small legacies, and all else; save that George Atkinson's name is substituted for Major Raynor's."

"Is nothing left to the Major in this later one?"

"Nothing."

Frank Raynor went back to Eagles' Nest, carrying his deplorable

news with him. Careless and sanguine-natured though he was, he could not shut his eyes to the dark future. It was not only the loss of the estate. That would have been bad enough, in all conscience; but there was also the money the Major had spent. The ready money that had been lying at Eagles' Nest and at her bankers at the time of Mrs. Atkinson's death: and also this past year's revenues from the estate. The Major had spent it all: and for this he was now accountable to George Atkinson; he could be legally called upon to refund it. A suspicious fear crossed Frank that he would be so called upon: a hard man, as he was now judging George Atkinson to be—perhaps without just cause—would most likely exact his full rights, no matter what misery and ruin devolved in consequence on others. In Frank Raynor's chivalrous good nature, he was thinking that George Atkinson, already a wealthy man, might have refused to take Eagles' Nest, and left the Major in peaceable possession of it. Perhaps very few men would agree with him: as the old lawyer said, a will was a will. This much was certain: that, no matter how large a sum the law might claim from Major Raynor, he had not a shilling to meet it with. Would they confiscate his annuity until it was paid—that five hundred a year; which was all he and his children would now have to fall back upon? "I wish with all my heart I had a good home for them, and a good practice to keep it up!" concluded Frank.

Poor Major Raynor! He was never to be subjected to this trouble, or to any other trouble in this world. It was past six when Frank got back to Eagles' Nest, and he found his uncle dying. The attack that was dreaded had seized on him about an hour before: just twelve hours after the first threatening in the morning; and there was little, if any, hope.

"Oh, my dear," gasped Mrs. Raynor in her pitiable distress, letting her head fall on Frank's shoulder, as her tears rained down, "it is so sudden! If he could but recover consciousness, and speak to us!"

"Aunt," he said, his own eyes misty, "don't you think we had better send for Edina? She would be a comfort to you."

"Edina!" was the sobbing answer. "My dear, she was telegraphed for this morning. Lamb went to the station just after you left. I know she would come off at once: she is on her way now. I could never bear up under this trouble without Edina."

"But she does not know of the worse trouble," thought Frank, looking on Mrs. Raynor with misty eyes. "It must be broken to her by Edina."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANK RAYNOR FOLLOWED.

THE whole house was steeped in grief—for Major Raynor had died at dawn. As most houses are, when a near and beloved relative is removed: and the anguish is more keenly felt if the blow, as in this case, falls suddenly. Edina was a treasure now: she had travelled by night and was early at Eagles' Nest. Mourning with them sincerely, she at the same time strove to cheer. She whispered of a blessed meeting hereafter, where shall be no more parting; she would not let them sorrow without hope. Even Mrs. Raynor felt comforted: and the little children dried their ready tears, saying that their dear papa was with the angels in heaven, and they should go to him when God saw that they were good enough.

But of that other misfortune none of the household yet knew. Frank took an opportunity of revealing it to Edina. It nearly overwhelmed even her.

"Eagles' Nest not theirs!" she cried, in a dread whisper. "Eagles' Nest George Atkinson's!"

"And the worst of it is," returned Frank, running through a brief summary of the details he had heard, "that he means to exact his rights at once, and take immediate possession of the place as soon as he lands. Did you not know this George Atkinson once, Edina?"

"Yes—a little," she answered, a faint blush tingeing her cheek at the remembrance.

"Was he selfish and hard then?"

"I—cannot quite tell, Frank. He did not appear to me to be so."

"Perhaps not. He was young then: and men get harder as they get older. But now, Edina, what is to be done? They will have to turn out of this house, and where will they find another?"

The problem seemed to be as hard as was that gentleman, now on his homeward voyage: George Atkinson. Edina sat in an attitude of almost despair as she tried to solve it: her hands folded quietly on her black dress; her usually calm, good face perplexed; her steady eyes anxious. The unexpected blow had fallen on her sharply; and in these first moments it was a hard task to battle with it. Suddenly lifting her two hands, she laid them on the smooth brown hair on either side her temples—as if she felt a pain there. So far as she, or any one else, could see, the Raynors would not have a penny piece to fall back upon: no income of any kind, more or less. The Major's annuity had died with him.

"They are all so helpless!" she murmured.

"Of course they are," assented Frank. "Not that that makes it any worse or better."

"It makes it all the worse," said Edina. "Were they experienced and capable, they might do something or other to earn a living."

A whole world of surprise shone in the candid blue eyes of Frank Raynor. "Earn a living!" he exclaimed. "Who would earn it?"

"All of them who are old enough," said Edina. "Mrs. Raynor and Alice, to begin with."

"Surely you cannot think of such a thing for *them*, Edina!"

"But how else will they exist, Frank? Who will keep them? Charley will never be able to do it."

A blank pause. Frank, brought thus practically face to face with the position, was unable to answer.

"I wish to goodness I could keep them!" he exclaimed at length "I wish I had a practice and a house over my head! They should al come to it."

"It has surprised me very much indeed, Frank—to go from the other subject for a moment—that you have not sought to establish yourself all this time."

"I was waiting for some money to do it with, Edina. Poor Uncle Francis was constantly expecting those lost funds to turn up. It seems they would have belonged to George Atkinson if they had come to light: but we could not have known that."

"Your Uncle Hugh blamed you for it, Frank. 'Better for him to take a situation as an assistant, than to fritter away his days at Eagles' Nest,' he used often to say."

Frank made no reply. The mention of his Uncle Hugh brought vividly to his mind that last ominous letter of warning he had received from him. With his usual incaution he spoke on the moment's impulse.

"Is Blase Pellet at Trennach still?"

Not quite immediately did Edina answer. Raising his eyes, he met hers fixed on him. And he saw something in their depths that he did not like: an anxious, questioning, half-terrified expression.

"Edina knows about it," thought he. And he turned as cold as the frost in winter.

"Yes, Blase Pellet is there as usual," she replied, averting her eyes. "And Mrs. Bell has left Trennach for good and is gone to live at Falmouth."

Why, the very answer; that last sentence, added gratuitously; would of itself have been enough to betray her cognisance. Else why should she mentally have connected the Bells with Blase Pellet? Frank quitted the topic abruptly.

Not until after the funeral—which took place, as was deemed expe-

dient, on the fourth day from the death—were the tidings of their penniless state conveyed to Mrs. Raynor and the rest. How Charles had contrived to keep counsel he never knew. He was looked upon as the successor to Eagles' Nest. Servants and others came to him perpetually for directions—Is this to be done, sir; is the other to be done; treating him as the master.

Mrs. Raynor received the news with incredulity, astonishment contending with disbelief. Alice burst into tears; Alfred went into a passion. They talked foolishly at first, saying they would go to law: the newly-found will should be disputed; the property flung into Chancery. The only two, capable of bringing reason to bear upon the matter, were Frank and Edina: and they might have been as bad as the rest, had the tidings only just burst upon them. They pointed out how worse than futile any opposition would be. Not a shadow of doubt could exist that the second will was perfectly correct and legal, and that the whole of the property belonged to George Atkinson.

On the second day after Frank's return from London, while the poor Major lay dead in the house, Charles received an official letter from Street the lawyer. It gave in detail the particulars already known, as connected with the new will, and stated that Mr. George Atkinson was then on his voyage to Europe; with sundry other statements and hints. This letter Frank read aloud now.

"You see," he said, "even our own lawyer gives in. He says not a word about opposition. No, there's no help for it; Eagles' Nest must go from you. But I think old Aunt Atkinson ought to have been ashamed of herself."

"She must have been dreadfully wicked," sobbed Alice.

One thing they did not tell Mrs. Raynor—that she could be made responsible for the money received (and spent) during the past twelvemonth. The claim was not yet made; would not be until Mr. George Atkinson's arrival; time enough to tell her then.

What their plans were to be, or where they could go, or how live, was the subject of many an anxious thought, as the days passed on. Edina suggested this and that; but poor Mrs. Raynor and Alice shrunk from all. As yet they could not realize what the turning-out of Eagles' Nest would be, and instinctively shunned the anticipation.

But upon none did the blow fall so bitterly as upon Charles. He was suddenly flung from his lofty position on the height of a pinnacle, to its base. A few days ago he was an independent gentleman, an undergraduate at Oxford, the heir to Eagles' Nest; now all these desirable accessories had melted away like icicles in the sunbeams. He must work for a living if he were to live; he must take his name off the college books, failing means to return to it; he must, for his mind's best peace, forget that there was such a place as Eagles' Nest.

Work for a living! How was he to do anything of the kind, he

asked himself. And, even if he were willing, and the work presented itself, (some charming, rose-coloured vision of a sinecure post, would now and again present itself indistinctly to his imagination) how would he be free to fulfil it, with those wretched debts hanging at his heels?

One little matter did surprise Charles—he heard nothing of Huddles. He had fully expected that within a day or two of that worthy man's departure, certain sharks of the law, or—as he seemed to prefer to call them—tigers, would attack him. But nothing of the kind occurred. The days went on and on, and Charles was still not interfered with.

About a fortnight after the death of Major Raynor, a letter arrived from Mr. Street. And, by the way, talking of the Major's death, what a grievous farce his will sounded when it was read. Eagles' Nest was bequeathed to Charles, with liberty to Mrs. Raynor to reside in it for the next ten years; after that, if Charles should deem it expedient that she should leave with the younger children, he was charged to provide her with a home. The Major recommended that a portion of the lost money, when found, should be put out to interest, and allowed to accumulate for her benefit. Quite a large sum was willed away in small bequests. This much to one child, that to another; some to Edina, some to Frank—and so on. The horses and carriages, the linen, some plate, ornaments and trinkets, with sundry other personal things that had come to him with Eagles' Nest, were left to Mrs. Raynor. All this, when read, sounded like a painful farce, a practical joke. These things were all George Atkinson's; and, of the bequeathed money, the poor Major possessed not a shilling to bequeath.

Lawyer Street wrote to say that Mr. George Atkinson was come, and had held a business interview with them. Mr. Atkinson, he hinted, was not inclined to deal harshly with the Raynor family, but leniently. He gave them one month in which to vacate Eagles' Nest, when he should himself enter into possession of it; and with regard to the money spent in the past twelvemonth, which did in reality belong to him, and to the mesne profits, he made no claim. Let them go out of his house quietly, and he should say nothing about arrears.

The conditions were, perhaps, as favourable as could be expected from a man of the world, cruelly hard though they sounded to the Raynors. *They* thought, taking all circumstances into consideration—his own wealth, which must be accumulating yearly, and his non-relationship to the former mistress of Eagles' Nest, and consequently non-claim in justice to inherit it—that Mr. Atkinson should have quietly resigned it to them, and left them in undisturbed possession of it. Frank, once hearing Charley say this, shook his head. *He* should have done this himself, he said, were he George Atkinson; but he feared the world, as a whole, would not; we did not live in Utopia.

And now came in the practical good sense of Edina. After allow-

ing them a day to mourn and grieve, she begged them to listen to her ideas for the future. She had been thinking a great deal, but could only hit upon one plan that seemed at all feasible. It was, that Mrs. Raynor and Alice should establish a school. Alice, a well-educated girl, good musician, and otherwise accomplished, would be of valuable aid in teaching.

Three weeks ago, they would—Alice, at any rate—have turned from the proposition with indignation. But those three weeks had been working their natural effect; and neither Mrs. Raynor nor Alice spoke a dissenting syllable. They had begun to realize the bitter fact that they must work to live. The world lay before and around them: a cold, cruel, and indifferent world, as it now seemed to them; and they had not a shelter in it. To keep a ladies' school would be less objectionable than some things, and certainly preferable to starving. Setting up a shop, for instance, or taking to a boarding-house. It was Edina who thought of these unpleasant resources, and Alice did not thank her for it. Poor Alice had lessons to learn yet. It is true that Alice might go out as a governess, but that would not be keeping Mrs. Raynor and the young ones.

"I see only one objection to this school plan of yours, Edina," spoke poor Mrs. Raynor, who was the first to break the silence which had ensued, as Edina's voice ceased; while Alice sat with downcast eyes, wet eyelashes, and an aching heart. "And that is, that I do not know how it is to be accomplished. We have no money and no furniture. It would be easy enough to take a house in some favourable situation, as you suggest; but how is it to be furnished?"

Edina did not immediately answer. Perhaps the problem was rather too much for herself. She sat in thought; her steadfast eyes gazing out with a far-away look over the beautiful landscape, that they were so soon to lose.

"Mr. Atkinson intimates that we are at liberty to remove any furniture, or other articles, we may have bought for Eagles' Nest, that he only wishes it left as it was left by Mrs. Atkinson," continued Mrs. Raynor: who, in these last few days of trouble seemed to have gone entirely back to the meek-spirited, humble-minded woman she used to be, with not a wish of her own, and thoroughly incapable. "But, Edina, the pieces of furniture would be too large, too grand for the kind of house we must have now, and therefore I am afraid useless. Besides, we shall have to sell these things with the carriages, and that, to pay outstanding debts here that must be paid: the servants' wages, our new mourning, and the like."

"True," replied Edina, somewhat absently.

"Perhaps we could hire some articles: chairs and tables, and forms for the girls to sit on, and beds?" suggested Mrs. Raynor. "Sometimes furniture is let with a house. Edina, are you listening?"

"Yes, I am listening; partly at least; but I was deep in thought just then over ways and means," replied Edina, arousing herself to her usual mental activity. "A furnished house would never do; it would be too costly; and so, I fear, would be the hiring of furniture. Now and then, I believe, when a house is to be let, the furniture in it can be bought very cheaply."

"But if we have no money to buy it with, Edina?"

"Of course: there's the drawback. I should think the neighbourhood of London would be the best locality for a new school: the most likely one to produce scholars. Should not you, Mary?"

"Yes," assented Mrs. Raynor with a sigh. "But you know all about these things so much better than I do, Edina."

The plans, and the capability of carrying them out, seemed to be, as yet, very indistinct; but at length Edina proposed to go to London and look about her, and see if she could find any suitable place. Mrs. Raynor, always thankful that others should act for her, eagerly acquiesced. Though, indeed, to get a house—or, rather, to get it full of furniture—appeared to be as a very castle-in-the-air. Chairs and tables will not drop from the skies: and Edina was setting her face most resolutely against running into debt.

"Now you understand," Edina said, the morning of her departure, calling Charles and Mrs. Raynor to her, "that I shall depend upon you to arrange matters here. If I am to find a house for you in London, I may have too much to do to return here, and you must manage without me. Set about what has to be done at once, Charles: get the superfluous furniture out of the house, for sale; and get your boxes packed, ready to come up. You must be out of Eagles' Nest as soon as you possibly can; on account of the heavy expenses still going on while you are in it. Mr. George Atkinson allowed a month: I should quit it in a tithe of the time. Besides that, Mary: you should be on the new spot to begin school before the midsummer holidays are over; it will give you a better chance of pupils."

They agreed to all: Charles rather dumpishly, Mrs. Raynor in simple confidence: anything suggested by Edina was sure to be for the best. It was impossible for Charles to rise up yet from the blow. With him, the aspect of things, instead of growing brighter, grew darker. Each morning, as it arose, was only more gloomy than the past one. A terrible wrong had been dealt out to him—whether by fate, or by that defunct unjust woman, his Aunt Ann, or by George Atkinson, he could not quite decide, perhaps by all three combined—and he felt at wrongs with the whole world. Edina had talked to him of plans for himself, but Charles did not hear her with any patience. Looking upon the present and the past to contrast them, drove him half mad. That he must do something, he knew quite well, and he intended to do it: but he did not know what that something was to

be; he could not see an opening for himself anywhere. Moreover, he also knew that he must make some arrangement with the people at Oxford to whom he owed money.

Another thing had to be done—the taking his name off the college books. Charles went down to do this; and to confer with his creditors. Very young men are often most sensitive on the score of debt: Charles Raynor was so: and it seemed to him a formidable and distressing task to meet these men, avow his poverty, and beg of them to be lenient and wait.

"I declare I'd rather meet his Satanic majesty, and hold a battle with *him!*" cried Charley as he started forth to the encounter.

But he found the creditors most considerate. They had heard of his reverse of fortune. The news of the fresh will put forward, and the consequent transfer of Eagles' Nest from the Raynors to George Atkinson the banker, had been made much of in the newspapers. One and all met Charles pleasantly; some actuated by genuine pity for the young man, others by the remembrance that you can't get blood from a stone. Half the sting was taken from Charley's task. He told them truly that he had no present means whatever, therefore could not offer to pay: but he assured them—and his voice was earnest, and they saw he meant it—that he would pay them whenever it should be in his power to do so, though that might not be for years to come. So he and they parted cordially. After all, no one individual debt was very much, though in the aggregate the sums looked formidable.

Mr. Huddles was left till last. Charles dreaded him most. The debt there was the largest. The two bills were for fifty pounds each, making one hundred; and the mischief alone knew what the added expenses would be. Not only did Charles dread him because he would have to eat humble pie, which he hated and detested, and beg the man to hold the bills on, but he believed that Mr. Huddles could clap hands upon him without ceremony. Nevertheless he had no choice but to enter on the interview: for he must know his own position before he could plan out or venture on any career of life. He went forth to it at dusk; some dim idea persuading him that tigers and kidnappers might not exercise their functions after sunset.

Mr. Huddles sat alone in his parlour when Charles was shown in: a well-lighted and well-furnished room. Instead of the scowl and the frown Charles had anticipated, he rose with a smile and a pleasant look, and offered a chair to Charles.

"We were both a little out of temper the other day, Mr. Raynor," said he; "and both, I daresay, felt sorry for it afterwards. What can I do for you?"

To hear this, completely took Charles aback. Down he sat, with some indistinct words of answer. And then, getting up what courage he could, he entered upon the subject of the bills.

"No one can regret more than I that I cannot pay them," he said. "I have come here to-night to beg of you to be so kind as hold them over. The expenses, I suppose ——"

"I don't understand you, sir," interrupted Mr. Huddles. "What bills are you talking of?"

"The two bills for fifty pounds each—I have no others. Although I know how unjust it must seem to ask you to do this, Mr. Huddles, as you are only a third party and had nothing whatever to do with the transaction, I have no other resource but to throw myself upon your good feeling. I am quite unable to take the bills up; you have probably heard of our reverse of fortune; but I will give you my word of honour to do so as soon as ——"

"The bills are paid," cried Mr. Huddles, not allowing him to go on.

"Paid!" echoed Charley.

"Paid; both of them. Why—did you not know it?"

"No, that I did not. Who has paid them?"

"Some legal firm in London. The name—let me see—Symmonds, I think. Yes, that was it: Symmonds and Son, solicitors."

Charley could only stare. He began to think Mr. Huddles was playing a joke upon him; perhaps to turn round on him afterwards.

"I don't know any people of the name of Symmonds, or they me," said he. "How *came* they to pay?"

"I think Major Raynor—I was sorry to see his death in the *Times* so soon afterwards—gave them the necessary orders."

Charles shook his head; it was not at all likely, as he knew. He lost himself in a maze of thought.

"The evening I saw you, I was running into the station to catch a train, having lingered rather too long at the inn over some late refreshment," explained Mr. Huddles, perceiving that Charles was altogether puzzled, "when a gentleman accosted me, asking if my errand at the place had not been connected with Major Raynor's son. I replied that it had. This gentleman then said that if I would furnish the particulars of the debt to Messrs. Symmonds and Son, solicitors, of London, they would no doubt see that I was paid; and he handed me their address. I sent the particulars up the next day, and in the course of a post or two received the money."

"It must have been Frank," thought Charles, the idea flashing into his mind. "What was this gentleman like, Mr. Huddles?"

"Upon my word, sir, I can hardly tell you," was the reply. "The train dashed in just as he began to speak to me; several passengers were waiting for it, and there was a good bit of confusion. It was dusk also. Nearly dark, in fact."

"A good-looking, pleasant-speaking fellow?"

"Yes, I think so. He had a pleasant voice."

"Nobody but Frank," decided Charles. "It's just like him to do

these good-natured things. I wonder how he found the money? And why in the world did he not tell me he had done it?"

So this great trouble was at an end; and Charles might for the present be pronounced free from worry on the score of debt. If the Fates had been bitterly hard to him latterly, it seemed that they yet held some little kindness in store for him.

But this visit to the University city was productive of the most intense chagrin in other ways to Charles Raynor, of the keenest humiliation. "But a short while ago, I was one of *them*, with the world all before me that I could hold my head up in!" he kept telling himself, as he watched the undergraduates passing in the street, then keeping their Trinity term, he holding himself aloof from them, for he had not the courage to show his face. If by unavoidable chance he encountered one or two, he got away as quickly as he could, after exchanging a few uncomfortable sentences. While they, knowing of his change of circumstances, of the blighting of his prospects, made no effort to detain him; and if their manner displayed a certain restraint, springing from innate pity, from delicacy of feeling, Charles put it down to a very different cause, and felt all the deeper mortification.

As he quitted Oxford by an early morning train on his way home, his thoughts were busy with what had passed. For one thing, he found that his days of torment at Eagles' Nest, when he went about in fear of writs and arrest—or, rather, dared *not* go about—had been without foundation. With the exception of Mr. Huddles—and that was much later—not a single creditor had followed him there: neither had any written to him, save the one whose letter had by misadventure fallen into the hands of Major Raynor. Who then was the Tiger, Charles asked himself. Could it be that, after all, that fiercely-named man had positively held no mission that concerned him? It might be so: and that Charles had dreaded and hated him for nothing. The Tiger had left Grassmere now: as Charles happened to know. Jetty said so the other day when he was at Eagles' Nest. To come back again sometime Jetty believed, for the gentleman had said as much to his sister Esther when leaving: he liked the lodgings and liked the place, and should no doubt be visiting them again.

And so, Charles Raynor returned home, relieved on the whole, in spite of his never-lifted trouble, and with a lively feeling of gratitude to Frank Raynor in his heart.

He could not yet personally thank Frank; for Frank and his wife had quitted Eagles' Nest soon after the funeral of Major Raynor. With the fortunes of its hitherto supposed owners come to an end, Frank could not any longer remain, a weight on their hospitable hands. It was at length necessary that he should bestir himself in earnest, and see in what manner he could make a living for himself and Daisy. One great impediment to his doing this comfortably was, that he had no money.

Save a few spare pounds in his pocket for present passing exigencies, he had positively none. Daisy was not very strong yet, and could not be put about. She was going to stay with her sister, Captain Townley's wife, for two or three weeks, who had just come over from India with her children, and had taken a furnished house in London. Daisy wrote to her from Eagles' Nest, proffering the visit: she saw what a convenience it would be to Frank to be "rid" of her, as she laughingly said, while he was looking about for some place that they could settle in. Mrs. Townley's answer had been speedy and cordial. "Yes, you can come here, Daisy; I shall be delighted to see you. But what a silly child you must have been to make the undesirable runaway marriage they tell me of! I thought all the St. Clares had better sense than that."

But the Tiger is not done with yet. On the day that Frank and his wife said farewell to Eagles' Nest, and took the train for London, Frank jumped out of the carriage at an intermediate station, to get a newspaper. On his way to jump into it again, he had his eyes on the newspaper, and chanced to go up to the wrong compartment, the one behind his own. Swinging open the door, Frank saw there was no room for him, and at the same moment found his face in pretty close contact with another face: one adorned with a silky brown beard and the steadfast grey eyes Frank had learned to know.

"This compartment is full, sir."

How far back Frank recoiled at the words, at the sight, he never knew. *It was the Tiger.* With a sinking of the heart, a rush of dismay, he made his way into his own carriage; and let the newspaper, that he had been eager for, drop uncared for between his knees.

"He is following me to town," cried Frank mentally, in his deep conviction. "He means to track me. How shall I escape him?"

(To be continued.)

PRINCESS ELEANOR.

XVIII.

DEAR GEOFFREY,—Whether new torments are in store for me, or whether I am reserved for better times, I know not—from the fact that I can write to you, you conclude that I have escaped death. A slight wound in my left shoulder is the only consequence of my encounter.

I had asked two young friends of mine to be my seconds. I told them as little as possible of the affair, the gravity of which they could not understand. They begged me to recollect that Werdan was one of the best shots in the country before he retired from the army. It was, therefore, to my interest to send him the sharpest challenge possible; a thing I should have done in any case, however. Our meeting was arranged to take place in the Park at eight o'clock the next morning.

I slept a few hours, but spent the greater part of the night in looking over my papers, making my will, and writing to Eleanor. I sealed all, and entrusted the documents to my seconds.

The feelings and sensations common to persons in my position were totally unknown to me. My life had lost all charm. Nothing remained but the wish to punish the villain who, with unprincipled heedlessness, had trifled with the life and honour of his fellow man.

We were the first to reach the spot with our doctor; but a few minutes later my opponent arrived with his seconds and another doctor.

The conditions were read aloud and signed by both adversaries and by the seconds. The pistols were now loaded, and the distance measured and marked.

We were to aim whilst the seconds counted six.

The usual attempt at reconciliation was made; but, as Werdan refused to give me back my word, it was of course unsuccessful.

The seconds gave us our pistols, the mouths of which were soon opposed to each other.

My adversary's second began to count.

At "Four!" both shots had gone off together. Neither of us wavered in the least. My second asked me if I felt pain, and I answered in the negative.

We took up the second pistols, and the counting again began. This time the shots were heard at "Five!" Werdan staggered, and in a

few moments fell heavily to the ground. His friends and the doctors hurried to assist him, whilst my seconds began to examine me. I felt an acute pain in my left shoulder, and the warm blood streaming out. The doctors bound up our wounds. Mine is but a slight hurt, and will scarcely require a few weeks to heal. Werdan's wounds are more serious.

What will become of me, friend? My life's best hopes are destroyed! Perhaps you are after all destined to be my only consolation.

As soon as my wound permits of my leaving this room, I start for Italy. For ever yours,

WALTER.

XIX.

Amy,—From a long, profound sleep I have awakened with a cry of horror! My dream, with its joys and its pangs, has faded with the returning light, and in its place has come a reality, whose brightest side even fills me with dismay.

A vile act of fraud has been committed in our house. In the place of Rembrandt's master-work hangs a copy, exchanged by some guilty hand.

I was present when the fraud was detected; saw with my own eyes how Walter Impach turned pale at sight of the copy; heard with my own ears how he confessed it to be his work. I saw him look around the room for one face which promised support. I, too, for a moment believed that this man had outraged friendship and hospitality; had betrayed all that is most sacred on earth; had stained his hand with crime.

On my begging him to do so, Ernest ended the painful scene. My eyes followed the retiring figure of the artist. On the threshold he turned round, and gave me one look. Amy, his life, his soul, lay in that look. It was the cry of one unjustly condemned, whose noble heart made no other protestation but that single look. It had a magical effect upon me. I felt that heaven and earth might now combine to prove him guilty; that all humanity might fill my ear with the most manifest evidence. I would have defied them all, and believed that look. It had not only made me forever his stanchest advocate--no, I myself was Walter Impach! Why do I use so many words to tell you what I felt, when in three syllables I can say it better than in volumes? *I love him!*

But not borne into the air by angel voices do those happy words sound for me. As the first peal of thunder of a coming storm they fall upon my heart.

I fell as one dead to the ground. When I awoke from my fainting fit, Ernest was sitting by my side, his head bent low, both his hands clasped on mine.

"Poor little flower," he said, "over whom the frost of the earth has spread so soon! Could I but have spared you that scene! You will distrust men of his sort all your life now."

Amy, dear, you would, like myself, have distrusted Ernest for the first time. I went to work very slowly, however, wishing to impress him by degrees.

"Have you no doubt whatever as to the artist's guilt? His love for old pictures is great, I know, but he could not conceal such a masterpiece as that! Of what use is it to him, if he can never look at it?"

"My innocent little dove! It is not a question of love of art. That man is the agent of some villain, and he has committed this act for money. He is poor, and may have been tempted by some large sum."

"Old Baron Gerhardt?" I timidly suggested.

"My child, I must not hear you utter such things. Your mind goes astray in this labyrinth of wickedness. A true nobleman is not capable of anything so mean!"

"What will you do?" I asked in my anxiety.

"Leave him a short time to repent. If the picture alone were in question, I should give it up, and let things rest as they are. But to permit a villain such as this to go about the land unmarked would be contrary to my sense of justice. Try and forget the whole episode, my love. I will do the same until I am forced to think of it again."

He kissed me on the forehead and went away.

He was scarcely gone when I sprang up. With the contending feelings that filled my heart I could not lie still.

"Forget the whole episode, Ernest! 'Twould be ceasing to exist!"

I lived over again the last few months of my life; the long time I had been together with the man I have trifled with. Yes, Amy, I have trifled with him, for how could I be blind to the thousand evidences of his love? I received them daily, hourly, and took them as something natural. How shall I exist now? how bear life without him?

In the dreadful discovery I have made, I see naught but a just punishment for the arrogance peculiar to our rank, which deems it more likely that one of its daughters should fall in love with her lap-dog than with a youth belonging to any class below it. But why should I atone for the sins of a whole caste? Why must I see him outraged, mocked, degraded, at the very moment when I feel that I love him with my whole heart? And I have no power to do anything! Tell Ernest of his last protesting glance? Such things cannot be described; they can only be felt. And everything speaks against him. Why did he copy the picture in secret? Why did he turn pale when the question was put to him? Why does he not come forward now, and clear himself to me?

Amy, I am half out of my senses as I write this. Surely he has

good reason for behaving thus, and I am wrong not to trust him, as a woman must trust the man she loves.

. . . . I have been interrupted in my letter. Prince Arsent was waiting in the drawing-room, and Ernest being out, and Cousin Dorothy's nerves still too much shattered by "that shameless hypocrite's behaviour," I could not refuse to receive him.

I scarcely forced a smile upon my lips, and got no further after the first greeting was over. Arsent took all the trouble upon himself, and never ceased talking. I caught a word here and there, and guessed that he must be telling me how lonely his father was in the solitude of his castle; how he had called him back, to brighten the last days of his life. When Arsent had reached so far, he rose, walked up to me, and as I looked up to him in surprise, he said:

"You are so equally amiable to all that it has been quite impossible to detect the slightest preference for any one of your admirers. It is for this reason that I hope nothing, and yet all. That the light of your eyes is my sunshine, you must have known all along. May I ask if my father is to receive the glorious news that Princess Eleanor of Waldemberg will one day grace our old castle as its mistress?"

It was too much, Amy, at that moment. Yet perhaps it was better so, for I could give him my answer more bravely than I could have done at any other time.

As I was framing my refusal as delicately as I could, Ernest came into the room. I tried to escape, but a look from my brother compelled me to remain.

Arsent stood speechless and embarrassed for some time, and then turned the subject.

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you," he exclaimed, "that early this morning I met your artist, Herr Impach, in a carriage. He had three gentlemen with him, in one of whom I recognised Dr. Jung. But what surprised me most was that at a short distance followed Werdan's brougham, with its owner and three other gentlemen in it. Could they be going to fight? And if so, what on earth should those two be fighting for? Besides, Werdan would have asked me to be his second."

Ernest became pensive, and Arsent, feeling doubtless the moment inopportune for pleading his suit, took his leave.

A duel, Amy! Tell me, was my cup not full to overflowing, that this sorrow must be added to the others?

I have sent an excuse for not appearing at the dinner-table, as it requires solitude to enable me to come to a resolution in my perplexing position.

If I think of Impach as I now know him, I start up, and in, the rapture of calling him my own, should like to press all the world to my heart. But scarcely am I happy in the thought, when other scenes

present themselves to my mind. The park in the dim light of dawn; two maniacs facing each other—for what reason? A flash, and one of them falls to the ground. The movement with which I precipitate myself towards him awakens me from my dream. It is but a dream; and yet it may be the truth! I close my eyes, and even then cannot shut out these horrible phantoms!

What shall I do, Amy? I cannot even shed tears; cannot find a word to console me in my distress; and I wish for you with all my heart!

Strange expedients suggest themselves to my mind. What shall I think of them in to-morrow's daylight? I am clear upon one subject alone; and that is—I wish to hear Impach justify himself. He must do so to me, if he refuse to all the world beside. But how am I to see him?

I do not care whether what I am about to do be against the laws of propriety; I feel that I cannot act otherwise. I shall send Fanny with a message to Herr Impach's house, telling him to be in our garden at noon to-morrow morning.

What will he think of me? He cannot think worse of me than my utter regardlessness has caused him to.

And I? How shall I get over the long hours that must elapse before I see him? How often shall I repent having sent for him?

Had I but you, Amy! You would help and advise me! But tell me, why did you not warn me when you saw me hurrying towards my destruction? My letters must have shown you what I was coming to, long ago!

Do not take my words amiss, Amy! I am so unhappy that I feel the necessity of accusing some one—anyone. I never spoke openly in my letters. But how could I explain the burning impatience with which I was wont to expect Herr Impach, when I knew not myself why it was so? How speak of the nameless grief or the enthusiastic joys I felt, when I knew not what to ascribe them to?

Dear Amy, when you write, approve all I have done and mean to do. By that time the die will be cast and my fate sealed.

Your Eleanor.

XX.

Heiligenstein.

Dearest Eleanor,—By the time you receive this letter I shall have had one from you, to free me from my anxiety about you, my dear, dear friend! Unhappy one, what is to become of you? Although I know that my advice will come too late, still I must write and justify myself. Poor Eleanor! I have long since known the secret of your heart. I knew that you had given your heart to the young artist long before you dreamed of love. It would be impossible to love you as I do, and not guess the secret of your soul.

Still, Eleanor, so long as you had not a misgiving on the subject, I had no right to awaken you. You were like the somnambulist, who, with firm and steady step, walks along the edge of a precipice; who will, if undisturbed, in all probability regain his home in safety. The warning word which awakens him may throw him into immeasurable depths, may cause his destruction.

Therefore, Eleanor, I did not warn you. You did not know what your rebellious little heart was about; unconsciously you were happy in his presence. You might never have come to a clear perception—a prolonged absence of the artist might have allowed others to please you, and your vessel might have entered the safe port of a happy marriage before you had discovered the dangerous cliffs that had threatened to shatter it to pieces. Had I warned you this would have been impossible. The knowledge of the disease was in your case more fatal than the disease itself; you could not then unconsciously have escaped danger. Had you been less ignorant of the true state of things, you would have read between the lines of my letter, and would have been alarmed. What I wrote could help you, once you had made a first discovery—the very first signal I dared not give.

What are you to do now? Dear girl, I am without the least anxiety on that account, for I know that your pure heart can only dictate noble behaviour. You will do what satisfies your brother and your own conscience, even at the cost of your happiness or your life! Still on one point let me warn you. Although I am but a few years older than you, I have had time to learn that in calm judgment we seldom go wrong in this world. Everything, dearest, is less bright than we have dreamed it. Your brother never doubts the guilt of the young artist; *you* are quite sure that he is innocent.

Pardon me, Eleanor, if, in choosing between these two alternatives, I stand on your brother's side. His high mind and clear judgment we both consider a standard in every question. You would not be Eleanor, if for a moment you doubted the innocence of him who stole your heart. But think, dearest, if all he has said and done up to this day be but hypocrisy, if he really be guilty, then you do not, cannot love him. Consider well before you act. Above all, trust to your brother, who has never yet been unjust to anyone. If you can persuade yourself that he is guilty, then will you spare yourself a thousand pangs.

Your brother, Eleanor, must have been entirely absorbed by other interests, or he could not have been blind to what was happening around him. Has he found what he has so long sought in vain—the woman with whom he would choose to pass his life?

I close this letter in my anxiety for you, and sincerely hope that a letter from you brings better news.

Your Amy.

XXI.

Thank heaven! How many times have I sighed that exclamation.

He is innocent. The noblest man in all the world—the one most worthy of my love!

And I have spent six days, Amy—six days for which I deserve all the joys of a happy future.

But you are impatient to hear what has happened. I could write nothing but tears until to-day, so I preferred not writing at all.

When Fanny entered the artist's house she found it in the greatest confusion. A duel had taken place: Walter had been slightly, Werdan seriously, wounded. After having been told this, the silly girl gave her message all the same, but the landlady informed her that the young man would most certainly not be able to go out of the house for a long time.

Fanny went daily to ask how Walter was. Yesterday he sent word that he would be in the garden towards evening.

I ordered a fire in the pavilion, and was quite delighted when Dorothy got ready about four o'clock to spend a long evening with a friend of hers. Ernest had gone to an Assembly.

You can well imagine how my heart beat when Fanny came to say that Herr Impach was waiting for me in the pavilion. I had scarcely thrown my fur cloak over my shoulders when my conscience revolted against what I was about to do. I threw the cloak down, and said to myself, "If I have all the defects of our rank, let me exercise at least some of the virtues that belong to it. A Waldemberg has no business to give a secret rendezvous in the garden. What I do I will do openly."

"Take Herr Impach into my small sitting-room," I said to Fanny.

Do you think, Amy, that it was the absence of Ernest and Dorothy that gave me such confidence?

With anything but a firm step I entered the room, where he awaited me. He rose, and slowly moved to meet me.

"I could not come before, as you desired. A slight wound in my shoulder ——"

"The consequence of a duel with Count Werdan," I interrupted.

"You know that also?"

"Does this *also* imply a confession of your guilt?" I asked.

"You believe in my guilt?" he said, and shrunk back. "Have you for a moment deemed me the most wretched villain on earth? and do you summon me here to listen to such a confession from my own lips?"

He dropped into a seat. I feared for a moment that he would

become unconscious; but the earnest expression of the face never relaxed. With his eyes fixed on mine he waited for an answer.

"On the contrary," I replied, "I am the only one who does not doubt your innocence. But I wish you to explain your strange behaviour."

"There never was anyone unhappier than I am," he cried. "The only way of showing my gratitude to you is forbidden to me. I am bound to silence by a word of honour."

"A word of honour?" I asked: and began thinking, as from the face, pale with the loss of blood, I looked to the arm he wore in a sling.

The truth flashed upon me as if by inspiration. I saw it all. Werdan had stolen the picture for his uncle. He had found some pretext by which he got a copy from Walter. To think a word binding in such a case was madness.

I walked up to him, forced him to remain seated, and then spoke to him in a tone which was certainly not a whisper:

"Werdan is the villain! You knew not a word of the fraud until my brother discovered it. You copied the picture without an idea what was to be done with the copy. Deny that if you can."

He turned away, covered his face with both hands, then whispered, "I cannot tell you an untruth: it is so."

"Then you are not bound by any word of honour! The duel has freed you from your promise."

He looked up at me again, his eyes glistening as if wet with tears. I sat down opposite to him, and after a while asked him to tell me all.

All was as I had imagined—all but the agony he suffered in that dreadful hour.

"What I felt during that short time," he said, "could alone excuse the look with which I presumed to meet your eyes. Without that hour, the secret of my heart would have been for ever hidden from Princess Eleanor. On my knees, I shall beg your forgiveness—shall pray that, through the fault of that moment, the doors of my paradise be not closed upon me for ever. A friendly word from time to time is all I ask."

He had risen from his seat and turned from me as he spoke the last words. I could hold back no longer.

In an instant I was at his side. I laid my hand on his shoulder, and, half unconsciously, I poured forth the longest speech I have ever made:

"So that is your opinion of me? Of course, being a *princess* is reason enough to enable anyone to be for months the object of a modest, but passionate devotion; to see the development of an incomparable talent, combined with every noble quality—and yet remain untouched. And when he who owns all this risks his name, his honour, and even his love, for no other purpose but to be true to a

carelessly-given word, she sees him accused and justified, and yet is as cold as marble! Do you really think, sir, that a princess must needs be without a heart? Could you have loved the wax doll you imagine me to be? Don't you think, Walter, that I too can love, perhaps yet more devotedly than you?"

I laughed and cried at the same time; and when he turned to me, with eyes starting from their sockets, and a face ten times paler than it ever was before, I threw my arms round his neck and cried, Amy, as I have never cried in my life, for the tears I had shed before were inspired by suffering, but those drops fell from unmixed joy and rapture.

What he told me afterwards I cannot repeat. All I know is, that it is well worth one's while to be a princess, if utter despair of success alone inspires men with *such* love.

That I am the happiest of mortals, you may well imagine. But what is to be done now?

I shall go to Ernest to-morrow, and confess all. How delighted he will be to hear of Walter's innocence! How astonished to hear of his Eleanor's love! Ernest once said: "You know that neither your mother nor your ancestors waited until their hearts spoke." Were those words meant to imply a warning, or a prohibition?

A whole world might step between Walter and me—it would not separate me from him. I have often heard them praise the indomitable persistence of our race: it shall be put to the proof. Death or victory shall be my watchword.

Ernest will ask for time to consider. Will you, Amy dear, use all your influence with him to persuade him in my favour? By that action you will become a mother to me. My poor mother would have been favourable to Walter. A lock of her hair, which I always wear, once mixed with Walter's fair curls: the colour was so like hers, I scarcely found my lock again.

And now, farewell, Amy! I require time to muster courage for to-morrow. I wonder whether a soldier advancing to battle feels what I feel at present?

Good-night, Amy! All good angels protect me to-morrow!

Your Eleanor.

XXII.

Dear Amy,—I am in such a state of excitement that I tremble all over—know not whether my hand will obey my will and write down all I have to say.

I had been afraid to meet Ernest at breakfast, but without reason, as he remained in his study and never appeared at all. As soon as I could get rid of cousin Dorothy, I directed my faltering steps towards the library. I thought that the best thing would be to begin without

preliminaries. When I opened the door, Ernest was walking up and down the room.

He turned, and I saw that he could scarcely force the usual smile on his lips. He had a letter in his hand, and after having kissed my forehead, he said:

"This letter, Eleanor, informs me of something so shameful that can with difficulty believe my eyes."

"Ernest, you alarm me! May I know what it is?"

"Of course; you *must* know, if it be only to warn you against trusting people too easily. Could you believe, Eleanor, that Werdan, whom I trusted as myself, whom I often called my best friend in the world, has been guilty of an act of felony?"

I tried to interrupt him, but he continued:

"I have received a letter from old Baron Gerhardt, in which he uses the strongest terms to speak of his nephew's behaviour. Werdan's cousin, and rival for the old man's inheritance, had heard of the scene in our house. He has been happier than I in getting at the truth, and has unmasked Werdan, who is guilty of the horrible deed. Do you hear me, Eleanor? a nobleman, and a cheat, a swindler, a thief!"

Ernest looked up from the letter, and met my glistening eyes.

"But this is my *good* news!" I exclaimed. "The whole story tells us nothing but this:—Herr Impach, whom you thought had cruelly wronged you, is innocent. Did this never strike you, dear brother?"

"What an optimist's talent you have for looking at the bright side of everything, and turning pain into pleasure. I must confess, to my shame, I had never thought of Impach at all in this business. The young man has been cruelly wronged, and has borne his misfortune manfully. He shall be well rewarded for his behaviour in this sad affair. Nothing we can do for him is too much. I wish I could find out what would be of great service to him!"

"Ernest, I know something which would make him happy beyond all measure!"

"Speak, then, you clever girl!" Ernest said, smiling.

Amy, you know what a coward I am, and can imagine how my heart beat at that moment. I could distinctly hear it like a hammer. My knees would scarcely bear me; golden stars were madly dancing up and down before my eyes. But now or never, I thought, and called up the courage of my whole life. I walked up close to my brother, and without bowing my head, I said:

"I have the honour, Ernest, Prince of Waldemberg, to ask of you the hand of your sister Eleanor, for the artist, Walter Impach!"

As when the sun suddenly sinks below the horizon and leaves a landscape in grey twilight, so did every trace of a smile fade from Ernest's face as he listened to those words.

Long after I had ceased speaking he stood there, his body bent

forward, his eyes staring wildly, pale as if lifeless. He seemed to be listening with his whole body.

At last he whispered, "Is this serious, Eleanor, unhappy one?"

I could only bow my head, and then take the place by his side to which he pointed in silence.

"If I did not know that you, like all of us, were not in the least light-hearted or careless, I should heed your mad words as little as they deserve. But I know you, and feel sure you will lend a willing ear to reasonable advice. Therefore will I show you how you have gone astray, and lead you back into the right path."

I pressed his hand, and shook my head, but I did not dare to interrupt him.

"Every man in this world inherits from his parents a part of their nature, tastes, and inclinations, which they in their turn have inherited from their fathers. Education and associates complete this inheritance, and form man's character in so decided a manner that, do what we will, he can never completely change it. Transplant man into a different region from that in which he has grown up, and misery will in most cases be the result. You have grown up in the midst of wealth; you are the favourite spoilt child of those to whom in this world is assigned the very first rank. Impach you never saw but when he moved in your own world. You have admired him, loved him, if you like, while you saw him as your equal. The romance, dear child, of which your little head is full, will not be understood by our world, who will simply say, 'A Waldemberg has taken a fancy to a fine young fellow!' will shrug its shoulders, and turn its back upon you—for to accept the young man as its equal you cannot expect it to do. Such a marriage, Eleanor, is not only impossible; it would in itself be the most miserable affair I can think of."

"Ernest," I replied, "I do not wish to reproach you, but remember your own words: 'An artist is everyone's equal.' When you said that, you laid the first seed of a powerful tree, which you now think you can uproot without an effort."

"You did not understand me rightly at the time. An artist is most certainly everyone's equal—*but only so long as he stands at his easel*, Eleanor. In life there are other hours too, and during those hours he is what he was born."

"As long as he paints he is a nobleman in his own right. At other times he shall be one through me."

"No, Eleanor. He does not rise to your own level, but you descend to his. This marriage would not elevate him—it would degrade you. And do you think the hour would never come when you would repent of having given yourself away so rashly? when you would blush for him? when those who now think it an honour to speak to you would turn away from you?"

"The more shame for them! It is surely no fault of mine if they are so mean. But, Ernest, I do not care for those who do not judge man by his true worth; who despise me if I give my hand to one who is not of themselves. I tell you plainly, Ernest," and as I said so I rose, "I would rather become poor and unknown as a peasant-girl, than renounce Walter. What else do I want if I have both him and you?"

"Ein hüttchen nur, auf grüner Flur!" Ernest said, mockingly. "Eleanor, you do not know what it is to be poor. You have not even an idea how much the dress is worth you so carelessly trail on the ground. I feel as if I were speaking to a foolish child. Eleanor, this is a thing not to be thought of."

"But I tell you, Ernest, that I can never cease thinking of it all my life. I never knew you value outward qualities more than real ones; and if these are to be considered, have you not a letter in your hand which speaks volumes in Herr Impach's favour? Had Werdan been as rich as Arsent, you would not have hesitated a moment in giving me to him. Of course, you knew nothing then—but when you compare the two, does not Walter stand before us in brilliant light, whilst Werdan shrinks into hideous darkness. Can you be angry with a young girl who, in her leisure hours, compares the man whose every word implies a noble heart, with him who, besides his birth, can boast of nothing else on earth?"

"And have you done that, Eleanor? Fool that I was to trust you to this young man!"

"Stop, brother! I give you my word that, until the moment when we all gave Walter up as lost, I never dreamed that my heart was his. No; until then I was all you could wish me to be. Had I known how things stood before, I should have tried to conquer this love of mine, for then I might have deemed it unworthy of me. Now, brother," I concluded in a whisper, as I threw my arms round his neck, "now it is too late; for now I am proud of my love, and consider it the purpose of my life."

"Poor child, and yet you must renounce it."

"Renounce, Ernest? You utter a word which for me has no existence. Let me tell you this: I love Walter so much that if to-morrow he said, 'Follow me into the furthermost part of the world,' I should most certainly do it, though not without having first knelt day and night before you, Ernest, to obtain your consent. Be moved by me, brother! You cannot deny me long, for I feel that my reasons are inexhaustible—my prayers will not cease but with my life—you cannot resist me in the end."

In silence Ernest paced the room, so absorbed in thought that he took books from the shelves, opened them without knowing what he did, and then put them back in some wrong place. His silence

increased my anxiety. Had I asked for something so utterly impossible as to call forth this cruel resistance?

"There are things, Eleanor," he at last began, "which a man can with difficulty explain to a young girl. Still it must be done. Man is proud, Eleanor. Be a woman never so devoted, her devotion *never* entirely overcomes the pride of him who from his cradle thinks himself a lord of creation. Impach has shown us that he is all we can wish for in man; therefore alone do I speak of him thus. Do you think that he would really be happy with you? Not that look of triumph, Eleanor! Let me, a man, judge another man by myself. If he has loved you all this time, as you assure me he has, then were you, in his eyes, an unapproachable, forbidden object; for I have never seen him betray, by the least sign, what he felt. You suddenly give yourself to him—you, to whom he was wont to look up as to a higher being. Believe me, Eleanor, he will accept the gift with reluctance. He has not obtained you by insurmountable efforts; his arm has not won you; you gave yourself to him, and to receive a gift is averse from man's nature. Every kind word, every caress, he must consider an undeserved boon; and this continual gratitude is no safe foundation for a life's happiness."

"Ernest, it is hard that *I* should be obliged to explain to you how Walter loves me. Of this, however, I can assure you: Walter can accept anything from me, without owing me thanks. His sufferings have placed every obligation on my side."

"Yours is the enthusiastic devotion of the woman who deems she has found 'the world's one man.' Eleanor, I have sought for it all my life, and never met more than the fragile love which, like a lighted straw, every blast can extinguish. Must I meet it now in you, where it drives me to despair?"

"Oh, you men, who always praise their experience! You have sought for true devotion, have you, and never met it? Ungrateful man! Ernest, if you had only chosen to see! You owe it to this hour alone if I break my word, and tell you that no man was ever more devotedly loved than you are ——"

Amy, forgive me! You should have seen the light in his eyes, when he came near me, laying his hand on my shoulder, intently gazing at me. 'Twas he, not I, pronounced your name. When I nodded, he sank back in a chair and hid his face. Had I known how he loved you, nothing would have kept me from speaking long ago.

Amy, dear, what a good heart mine must be. I forgot the miserable state of my own affairs, and was happy in your and Ernest's happiness. When I did remember how things stood, however, I thought I must make use of my time while he was in this soft mood.

"If the world contained a second Ernest, brother, I should certainly have preferred him to Walter, for I certainly do not mean to

say that I disdain the good things of life. Amy is luckier than I—her heart chose first, and her reason will approve the choice of her heart. But confess frankly, Ernest, would you have liked Amy not to notice you had you appeared to her in less brilliant colours? What you would like in Amy will you blame in me?"

"Eleanor, you torment me cruelly! I am only thinking of your welfare in this matter; I do not take myself into consideration, and our family but very little. Were Amy in your position, and I the happy one"—you would have given worlds to see the expression of his face just then, Amy—"were I the happy one who, although destitute of name, fame, or fortune, had won her heart, I would speak otherwise. As her brother, however, I could not honourably say anything but what I have told you, and once more earnestly repeat: 'Desist from your mad purpose—desist!'"

He spoke in softer tones, and a very slight ray of hope dawned upon me. Had *you* but been here!

"Brother, do not speak thus," I once more began. "I love Walter so earnestly and deeply that your voice might become almost hateful to me, if it never ceased to speak against the choice of my heart. Hear me, Ernest, for by the memory of our poor mother I pray and implore you to make her orphan happy!"

"You do wrong to remind me of our poor mother, Eleanor. I still see her, as she rallied her last forces to lay you, a baby, in my arms. 'Protect my child,' she said, 'protect it from all the dangers of this world. Do not allow passion's storms to blow over this fair little head. I would rather not have her *too* happy, than think that she might some day be miserable!' It was thus our mother spoke in her dying hour. It is as though she had had some foreboding of what has to-day happened. Her own words tell you how she would have decided."

"Not if she had known Walter!"

"One thing more, Eleanor. If I, your guardian, give my consent to this unheard-of marriage, what will the world say? And we *must* mind what it says, for we have made it the arbiter of our actions. Shall I not be likened to the faithless steward in the New Testament?"

"Ernest, if I was wrong to remind you of our mother, surely you did worse when you recalled the *guardian* to me! Have you forgotten how old I am? Have you forgotten that in six months' time your responsibility as guardian ceases? Oh, it is cruel that I should be forced to use such arguments! Do you not know, Ernest, that my love can make me forget my duty, my feelings towards you, everything? What would Amy not do for you? But no brother steps in to separate you two!"

You see, Amy, that my words were becoming each moment more bitter. Still, although I repented of them as soon as they were spoken,

I did not recall them, for I felt that my cause was just, and that *all* must be said to win it.

"You have lost yourself in a labyrinth of sentiment: you are no longer Eleanor, my quiet, clever Eleanor!"

"No, I am not! Was it really so great a merit to grow up like a flower, without a throb, without a passion? I feel quite myself, although faculties that slumbered within have at last awakened to life. A new phase of my life has opened, and I am no longer Eleanor of Waldemberg—I am Eleanor Impach, for whom I have no cause to blush. Brother, you abuse your power to make me unhappy, for I feel it—I could not buy my independence at the price of your love!"

What I looked as I spoke this I cannot tell, but Ernest faced me for some time in silence, tokens of wonder and even admiration in his eyes. Where I gained the courage to speak those words I know not. After a pause, Ernest took both my hands in his, and then said:

"God alone knows what torments you have inflicted on me this day! Why did you at the same time speak words that must needs have made me happy beyond measure? Eleanor, I cannot see you miserable, but I cannot allow you to purchase your present happiness at the price of a life's peace. If your love resists time, then alone a chance of future happiness is to be thought of. Wait one year from this day, and, if you then speak as you have spoken to-day, I will give my consent, and allow Eleanor to step from the ducal palace to the studio of the artist."

"Ernest, my brother! You think to frighten me by a short year! You do not know me or Walter. But if you require this evidence of our love, be it granted."

"In the interval, Eleanor, you neither see the artist nor correspond with him. He shall undertake a journey, and you will help me to prepare a home for Amy."

What I had not done when I entreated, I did now in my gratitude—I knelt to Ernest. Merciful heaven! I can scarcely believe in so much happiness; and am not sure if I dream or wake.

. . . To-day, when he has received Walter, Ernest will start for your house. He brings you this letter, and presents Walter to you.

Greet him once more from me.

I shall soon see you again, now, dearest Amy—beloved sister.

Your Eleanor.

XXIII.

Believe me, Geoffrey, were I to think of what I have outwardly gained alone, I should most certainly refuse it at the price of the trials I have gone through! But ten times would I suffer them to gain the heart I now call my own.

Oh, Geoffrey! What is all the bliss of other mortals to my happiness! Two days more, and I stand with Eleanor at the altar!

The torments of doubt, nay, of despair, have been succeeded by the inebriating feeling of safety,—the knowledge that I may spend a whole life of immeasurable happiness side by side with her, whom no devotion can ever repay what she has done for me!

The first weeks of our new life we will spend in that quiet valley of the Alps where Eleanor first dreamed of love. Then we come to Italy—this time you may believe me, Geoffrey. I have great plans for the future; we will spend several years in Italy, and it is there I will call into life the works of art my fancy already paints in vivid colours. Although no Raphael, I must become worthy of my "Fornarina." Twice already has she been the cause of my progress!

But happy people have few words!

Good-bye till we meet in Rome!

Yours, WALTER.

XXIV.

Friend of my Walter!—Before he could seal it I have taken this letter from him. I was not to read it, and yet I wish to add a few words.

He thinks he has monopolised happiness, and I waste all my eloquence on him in vain to persuade him that I am far happier than he can be.

What I have had time to tell him over and over again shall not be unknown to you.

My brother's happiness at the side of the noble, modest girl, who for years knew no greater delight than the thought of him! When he had once left me, he did not return until he had brought back with him Amy, Princess of Waldemberg. Perhaps moved by the lively part I had taken in the happy event of his life, one evening, as he had one arm round Amy's waist, he asked, with an arch smile:

"How do matters stand, Eleanor?"

I could not see the expression of my own eyes when I looked up. All I know is that Ernest, perhaps entreated by Amy, wrote that night to Walter, and called him back. We were to spend the last months of our year of trial together.

I knew exactly how long the letter, and how long Walter, would take, and yet I thought I should die before the moment came in which I was to see him before me. How patiently had I waited all those months, without a word of longing, without a word of regret! And during those few days I scarcely recognised myself. Eleanor seems to bear misfortune better than happiness!

I am not sure that I might not have run off to meet him some day, had not Ernest brought me something to quiet my throbbing heart.

Walter's letters to Geoffrey!

Some good angel must have suggested to you the idea of sending them as a sort of evidence to Ernest—you have become my best and truest friend through those delightful pages. And yet I envied you, during a moment, for having known the depths of Walter's heart, our wonderful meeting, his great love, long before I dreamed of what was going on. But tears soon washed away every trace of envy, and now I am waiting impatiently for the hour when I can stretch my hands out to you, and let their pressure tell you what a friend you are to us both.

How happy we are! You will see it in our eyes—which by that time will leave off becoming moist—as soon as they meet. We have had to buy our happiness so dearly that it is almost natural that the tears, which did not flow during darkness, should now take their course, when the sun is shining so brightly on our lives.

How much we have to tell you! But our history contains some dark pages besides the bright ones. Perhaps we shall not like to think of them when we meet in Rome. Therefore a name: "Werdan"; and the country which receives the unhappy man: "Russia." I know very little more myself.

I must close this letter, and, before I do so, make a confession, which will induce you to believe how very unwillingly I put down my pen.

Twilight has succeeded day, and that is the hour which Walter considers the happiest in all the twenty-four. We sit together on the divan, under my picture, between ferns and palms, hand clasped in hand, and speak of— everything that interests us! The days that are coming, the ambitious plans of my artist. But more than that, of the past, which still hides treasures wherewith to make each other happy.

Walter has threatened to ring for lights if I do not put down my pen—and if he does so, we lose our twilight hour.

Geoffrey, all lovers are selfish. With a doleful look towards this letter, I yet turn to Walter, and in a few more seconds even the friend in the Holy City will be forgotten.

In a month we shall be more reasonable!

For the last time,

ELEANOR OF WALDEMBERG.

(THE END.)

ON THE WYE.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

THE following pages are but an outline of a few days' progress through one of England's loveliest spots. Some day, perhaps, the picture may be filled in more completely than is now possible.

We started from the Court in an open carriage and a shower of rain: a somewhat untoward conjunction of circumstances. This was not encouraging as a commencement. For some time past the weather had been gloriously bright and beautiful. Now, on the very day of departure for the marvels of the Wye—capricious as a coquette who distributes her smiles and favours by the rules of contrary—it had changed countenance. In the morning alternate clouds and sunshine: corresponding variations in the barometer of our hopes. At noon clouds, but no sunshine: corresponding depression in said barometer. And now, on the very point of setting out, downfall of rain and total eclipse of quicksilver.

It became a debateable point whether to start in spite of this, or remain at home, and await that very uncertain alternative—a more favourable opportunity. E., ever ready with an answer or a suggestion, spoke first.

"Let us risk it by all means," she counselled. "If you put it off, you will not go at all. Unless you start to-day, *I* cannot accompany you. On Monday, you know, I am due on a visit to Fairford. I cannot put that off any longer. The weather will clear."

This sounded reassuring.

"Besides," said J., taking up her parable, "you have written for rooms at Ross and Worcester, and you will have to pay for them whether you occupy them or not."

J. is an authority in matters of social economy. Had chance made her a man, she would have been a great political economist, and would certainly have risen to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is a gift no sensible person would despise.

"Again," remarked A., whose temperament at all times inclines her to indulgence in the dolce far niente, "it seems a pity that all our plans and trouble should be thrown away. Yes, we had better risk it."

At this moment an exclamation of dismay, accompanied by a startled look, broke from all three simultaneously.

"You forget! Our best bonnets! Our dresses for Sunday! They have all been sent to Worcester, with E.'s whole luggage! That quite settles the question."

I felt that the die was cast. Nothing more need be said. Where "loves of bonnets" are concerned, ladies would brave the fire and

fury of a French Revolution. A revolution of the elements could have no restraining power. The order was given, and we departed.

As we turned from the noble building its antiquated beauty stood out conspicuously. It is an ancient and remarkable structure, this old Court, some portions of it dating back to the reign of one of the Henrys. Its massive walls, almost a yard in substance, have stood the test of ages: and apparently intend to run a race with Time. The pomp of royalty, the strut of pride, the charm of beauty, the luxury of wealth, the ring of mirth, the wail of despair: all this its grand old walls have witnessed. Its fine oak panels, its carved beams, its tapestried walls (work of the sixteenth century), all bear witness to ages and generations now long passed away. Its gabled roofs, its mullioned casements, its latticed panes, all seem to bid defiance to the ages yet to come. Impossible to speak of the wonderful view from its windows. The immense tract of rich and varied country, the exquisite valley, the far-off Malvern hills on the one side, the yet farther off Black Mountains on the other. We have neither time nor space here to devote to a mansion that has its place in history; that possesses its annals and its haunted rooms, its romances and its every-day records.

A long sweep, a continual but gentle descent, and we reach the lodge gate, which finally turns us into the high road. Old Charlotte, who is progressing towards her ninety years, hobbles out of her lodge, swings back the gate, drops a curtsy as the carriage passes through, and looks after it: doubtless regretting that sundry shawls and umbrellas conceal the feathers and laces which delight her old eyes whenever the ladies pass her way.

Poor old Charlotte has not the happiest or easiest time of it. She has long been a lone widow, which may or may not be a misfortune, according to the temperament of her late spouse. But she has a son whose conduct to his mother must be held up, not as a pattern, but as a warning to the rising generation. There are times—happily not frequent—when this unworthy offspring pays too deep a devotion to the cider cask, if he does not fall under the influence of a yet more potent spell. At such periods he becomes possessed of the idea that his old mother, though toiling for him night and day, neglects her duty towards him: and that it is expedient to bring her to a sense of her responsibilities by administering a sound castigation to the poor dame. Occasionally she may be seen issuing from her shell, on a fine spring or summer's morning, with a halt in her gait, and but one serviceable eye; the other being concealed behind a rampart of rainbow-coloured hues. Happy for the son that he possesses a mother, or he and his master would probably arrive some day at a very serious and mutual understanding.

But the Court is out of sight, and old Charlotte too; and we are

bowling away on the road to Ludlow. For the moment it is a narrow road; the hedges rise up on either side, enclosing fields of rich green pasture, and cattle of various kinds cropping the grass or quietly chewing the cud: the old cows looking all the while with their blinking eyes and wise faces as if they were pondering over the affairs of the nation.

What a drive it is! Every step of the way of such beauty as you find only in England, and in the most favoured of her counties. A maze of undulating hills, near and afar off; of richest pastures; of well-grown, waving trees; of running brooks; of splendid hedges; of banks of ferns and wild flowers: whilst every now and again the whole beauty of the scene seems to culminate in one point, and you long to stop the carriage and gaze around for hours.

Presently, after a drive of some miles, Ludlow itself came into view, with its hilly streets, its church tower, beacon to a most worthy edifice; its famous, most interesting castle, proclaiming its existence and demanding attention from its hill-crowned summit. Nothing can be more beautiful than the situation of Ludlow as you approach it—not as now—but from the railroad. The town sleeping on the hill-side and basking in the hollow; the square tower rising against a background of trees; the hills gloriously wooded, suggestive of all that is sylvan and delightful. The smoke, curling upwards from a forest chimney, adds no little to the rural charm of the scene—as smoke invariably does when thrown out by a background of wooded heights.

We progressed onwards, and clattered into Ludlow; up one hill and down another; until at last we came to a full stop at the station. After all, the rain had rather laid the dust than damped our enjoyment. We began to hope again.

The train steamed up; the station-master secured a vacant compartment; a whistle, a puff, and we were gone.

Our first halt was at Hereford. Here we spent an hour or two for the sake of the cathedral, which never greatly impresses us. We attended service, but could not bestow great praise on the choir. Perhaps they have a reserve force for special occasions. Back to the station, and onwards again towards Ross.

Here we were on one of the most exquisite bits of railroad travelling in England: the road lying between Hereford and Gloucester. Six or seven times it crossed the Wye. Its rich banks, its winding course, may be traced on all sides; surrounded by an amphitheatre of luxuriant hills, which shift their aspect as the train rushes onwards. The red tinge of the soil gives to the landscape that glow of warmth which so heightens its effect. Look where and when you will, nothing but a bewildering wealth and maze of beauty meets the eye: an effect increased tenfold if the sky happens to be cloudless and the sun is pouring its charm and influence upon the earth. The presence and

absence of sunshine upon a landscape may almost be compared to the presence and absence of love in the heart of man. In the one case all is beauty, warmth, light, morning: in the other all becomes barren, cold, darkness, night. For scenery to have its full power and influence upon the mind and spirit, the accompaniment of sunshine is indispensable.

Ross: with its steep, straggling streets, and old-fashioned looking houses, gable-roofed. It was consoling to find the rain had ceased, though the clouds still lingered. The large omnibus from the Royal Hotel was in waiting, and we had it to ourselves. The manager met us at the door, our note in hand. "Every sitting-room in the house was engaged, and had been for days past, but she had retained excellent bedrooms."

Well, it was no very severe affliction to dispense with a sitting-room for one night. And when one of the bedrooms disclosed its several windows overlooking the Wye, and all that glorious prospect that has become a byword, we felt that this left little to be desired in the shape of accommodation.

Then, combining two meals, we ordered a substantial tea, which was soon made ready for us in the large coffee-room. This, like the omnibus, we had to ourselves. It was getting too late in the year for that phenomenon, the ordinary British tourist, and we profited by the fact. Tea ended, we found that we were just in time for evening service. Some years had elapsed since I last attended service in the fine old church, and I was glad to do so again. As a boy I had spent a few weeks in Ross; the beauty of the neighbourhood had produced an unfading impression upon me. I had never since visited the place, and wished to see how far time and change would strengthen or diminish these impressions.

Is not this at all times a most melancholy and painful pleasure, if the interval be protracted to a period say of only ten years? The last time we visited such and such a spot— and this; the changes that have taken place in others and in ourselves; old friends lost by death or circumstances. 'Tis then we realise the truth and pathos of the lines:—

"Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.
The smiles, the tears of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone, now dimmed and gone,
The cheerful hearts, now broken!

"When I remember all
The friends, so linked together,
I've seen around me fall,
Like leaves in wintry weather,

I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled, whose glory's dead,
And all but he departed.

"Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad memory brings the light
Of other days around me."

All the events that have taken place crowd in upon the brain. The world for a moment seems to be slipping from us. We realise that, most certainly, time ever rolls on, and that we also shall one day change and pass away from the face of things. Our past life rises up before us like the shifting scenes in a phantasmagoria. Who amongst us would not wish to live some portion of that time over again?

In those few weeks of my boyhood I had been much attracted by the branches of a tree that grew within the church, and was trained in front of one of the east windows. The scene is still vividly before me. A quiet Sunday morning. A bird flying about the church during service time; the doors open to admit such cool air as could find its way in. Outside, the green grass, the quiet graves where the dead rested, the waving trees rustling in the breeze. Hot, gladdening summer sunshine pouring upon all; but we in the cool shade of the large old church. The stillness and repose of the Sabbath making itself felt; nothing to disturb the peace, to interrupt devotion; nothing but the soothing monotone of the reader or the preacher's voice, or the diapason of the fine old organ, or the exquisite strains of a boy's solo. Nothing can eradicate this picture from the mind. To this day church never appears so much like church and worship as on a summer's day in a quiet country place, with doors open to the grave-yard, and the waving trees and the blue sky, and the song of the birds. It seems to bring us nearer to that haven whither, let us hope, we are all travelling. A different influence, this, from a church in a crowded and fashionable metropolis, with the constant roll of carriages and the utter absence of repose and stillness.

The next morning was cloudy and threatening. A boat had been ordered for us overnight to carry us on to Monmouth, and as soon as breakfast was over we lost no time in starting.

As we entered the boat the sun broke through the clouds. This we accepted as a good omen, and such it proved. The wind shifted from S.W. to N.W. The clouds rapidly cleared, the blue sky came out, and for the remainder of the time we were favoured with the brightest and most charming weather. A soft N.W. wind, and white fleecy vapours sailing leisurely, and not too closely, over a canopy of clearest azure. Nothing could be more delicious and exhilarating.

A couple of strong boatmen took the oars, and we were soon gliding rapidly down the river. It is not possible to imagine the reality, reader, unless you have yourself experienced it. The enjoyment was

intense. The picturesque banks, the green fields, the gloriously-wooded hills; which attain perfection round and about Ross; the bright sunshine, the blue canopy over all. It was exquisitely beautiful. If it would only last for an age, or until such time as body and nerves were thoroughly restored and braced up; ready to begin again, like a giant refreshed, the wear and tear of everyday life!

Our first halting-place was Goodrich Castle: a ruin it was impossible to pass without visiting, if only for the sake of the view to be obtained from its summit. The ruin is full of romance and beauty, with its ancient walls, some of them ivy-grown, its green sward, its old associations: certainly one of the greatest attractions of the Wye.

Nothing, surely, could exceed the beauty of the view from the topmost heights, on this marvellously clear day. For miles and miles, on all sides, stretched a dazzling, bewildering panorama. At our feet the river ran, cool and glittering in the sunshine. Far and near its winding course could be traced. Hills and valleys surrounded us: on all sides the most lovely, graceful, and capricious undulations. Here a village lay half concealed amidst luxuriant verdure; there the town of Ross, with its conspicuous church spire, upraised its head. The view was as extensive as it was wonderful and varied. True, we had not here rugged mountains and snow-capped heights, rushing torrents or steep precipices. No eagle spread forth its wings to soar beyond the range of vision. But no feature of sylvan English scenery seemed wanting: such scenery as one might imagine set to the music of Handel's Pastoral Symphony. The shadows of the white clouds passing over the sun chased each other over hill and vale, silent and mysterious as if cast by a host of the spirits of the air. Round about us, now resting, now spreading forth, and now gathering together, the rooks, sole inhabitants of a bygone day and splendour, whirled restlessly to and fro, with weird, hoarse clamour.

The scene is not easily matched in England, and we turned reluctantly away. At the foot of the castle we were of course met and saluted by the inevitable old woman with her treasures of ginger-beer and photographs. This particular dame was not old; she was tolerably comely and buxom; and she informed her hearers that she and her ancestors had had the honour of providing ginger-beer to sightseers for the best part of a century.

"And hard times it now is, sir," she concluded. "Not at all what it used to be. We don't get half the visitors we used to once. The boatmen, a many on 'em, like to get over their work, and persuade their parties not to land at Goodrich Castle. They persuade them it's not worth the time, and that there's nothing to be seen they can't see from the river. So more boats pass us than stop to land."

As if to corroborate the dame's statement, as she spoke two boat-loads of tourists passed down the river, paused a moment, looked up

at the castle, and continued on their way. If it be true that this is due to the influence of the boatmen, the sooner the mistake is rectified the better. Many people are easily persuaded; are too ready to trust to the opinions of others rather than exercise their own. It is impossible to exaggerate the loss to those who pass Goodrich Castle, and neglect to visit this time-worn, time-honoured ruin. It dates back to the days of the Saxons, and beneath its walls we feel ourselves in the midst of past ages. Wordsworth, alluding to his well-known poem, "We are Seven," observes: "The little girl, who is the heroine, I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793." Later on he continues: "In the spring of 1841, I re-visited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little girl there in 1793. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new castle, set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that can be done by antiquity and nature, with their united graces, remembrances, and associations."

Re-entering our boat, we were soon gliding swiftly down the river again towards Monmouth. To describe the progress step by step would be impossible in the limited space at command. Suffice it to say that the beauty of the scene was constant and uninterrupted; that the interest never flagged; that each turn, each bend of the river disclosed its own particular and individual feature whereby to mark it in memory's storehouse. For a considerable distance the scenery was calm and sylvan; but as we approached towards Symond's Yat the banks changed aspect. They became for a time more wild and rugged, the Coldwell Rocks presenting a towering and magnificent surface to the river. At Symond's Yat the cliffs are 600 feet above the level of the sea. Here we landed. The distance by the river from this point to the new weir is from four to five miles; whilst, walking, it is scarcely 600 yards. The boat now pursued its journey, relieved of a portion of its freight, and we commenced the ascent of Symond's Yat. All who possibly can should adopt this course. In the first place, it is a great help to the rowers; and secondly, the view from the summit of the rock is so marvellous that none should miss it. Here we gazed down upon the river, which ran between hills richly clothed with trees to their very summit. The eye was arrested by the amazing wealth of verdure displayed. In all directions, far and near, the capricious and picturesque windings of the river could be traced. In the distance, but one amidst a thousand points and objects of interest, Goodrich Castle reared its head, whence, an hour or two ago, we had gazed down upon a scene less varied, but almost as impressive as this.

We scarcely knew how to leave it and descend the other side of the hill. But there, at last, were the boatmen coming down the stream, and our journey was not yet over. So again we found ourselves

gliding along, drifting downwards : now in calm, untroubled waters, now passing over a small shallow rapid, that, like a shrew, for ever disturbed the peaceful surface of its life by its senseless murmurings. At length, a long reach of river, spanned by a distant bridge, a church spire rising picturesquely amidst trees, and Monmouth stood before us.

It is needless to enter fully into the attractions of the ancient town. Agnes Strickland describes its site as the most beautiful in England : a verdict to be received with hesitation, exquisite as it is. Shakespeare and Gray have sung its praises, in company with historians and novelists. It is supposed to have been a Roman station, and was fortified at a very early date. Its castle, of which little remains, is one of the most celebrated and interesting in the annals of history, as being the birthplace of Henry V.

Landing from the boat, we bent our steps towards the hotel to which we had been recommended. On our way we found little to arrest the attention, with the exception of one or two old curiosity shops, whose ancient china so roused A.'s love of the antique that she could with difficulty be drawn from them. Whilst dinner was being prepared at the hotel we sauntered forth for a further inspection of the town.

As the needle to the pole, as the charmed to the charmer, as a lover to his mistress, so A. insensibly led the way back to the old curiosity shops. This time an outward inspection was by no means sufficient, and I entered with a feeling of resignation. Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs. But the danger was delayed—delayed, not dismissed. One of the chief rooms, where reposed the most valuable specimens of rare and antique china (we quote from the owner of said china), was locked up, and could not be opened that night. Trembling, I heard a decision given to return the next morning : and knew my fate. This episode would scarcely call for record, but that it subsequently gave rise to a somewhat amusing incident. Whether amusing or not to the present writer, the reader may judge of in time and place.

As for the town itself a very few words will suffice. The streets seemed wide enough and well built in places, but few traces of antiquity were observable in a hasty inspection. The gateway of the bridge over the Monnow was interesting, but, like most other things, spoilt by restoration.

The next morning, instead of continuing our journey to Chepstow by water, it was decided, after some deliberation, to drive thither by the banks of the river. The drive is preferable to the row, and is justly considered one of the most exquisite in England. Every feature of the landscape comes out fully ; whilst, on the other hand, towards Chepstow the river becomes so tidal as frequently to leave its muddy banks exposed to view : thus, when seen from the waters—which now lose their transparency and become thick and turbid—disturbing many of the romantic feelings and impressions that have gone before.

It was therefore arranged to start for Chepstow at two o'clock. This would leave time to drive to Raglan Castle and inspect the ruins. Soon after ten the hotel supplied a handsome barouche and a capital pair of horses, and we set out for Raglan.

A drive of eight miles along the Abergavenny road, picturesque, like every drive in this neighbourhood, and full of varied and striking beauties. No longer the river Wye, but hills near and distant, clothed with the most luxuriant foliage; trees, and fruit-laden orchards, continuing mile after mile. At length, a sweep round, and we soon halted at the entrance to Raglan Castle. Alighting, we passed through the gateway.

The sight that met the eye was one never to be forgotten. Here, indeed, we stood before the greatest attraction in this part of the country; before one of the grandest ruins not only in England, but probably in the world. It is a castle full of historic records and associations, many of them of the deepest interest. It was the last castle that defied the power of Cromwell. Here the unhappy Charles I. visited the Marquis of Worcester, and took refuge within its walls in July, 1645. The castle was besieged by Sir Thomas Fairfax, from the 3rd of June to the 19th of August, 1646. An honourable capitulation was then effected; the Marquis proceeded to London, where, contrary to the articles of surrender, he was seized and imprisoned.

From the present ruins an idea may be gathered of what it was in the days of its glory. On entering we were dazzled by the sight. Surrounding the castle was a carpet of the most brilliant verdure, most beautifully kept grass. The magnificent ruin was exposed in all its pride, though not in all its extent. Before us rose the walls, hoary with age, ivy-crowned, battlemented, their summits taking the most broken and picturesque forms, and standing out marvellously against the blue sky. The sky itself was the most favourable to such a scene. A N.W. wind was blowing gently; and the blue of the sky was brought out in intenser and more exquisite contrast by the white feathery clouds that chased each other as they floated onwards. These clouds or vapours did not interrupt the sunshine, whilst they cast their fleeting, cooling shadows over the brilliant sward and the magnificent ruin. I had seen many ruins both at home and abroad, but seldom one equal to this. It may have been that the somewhat unexpected grandeur of the sight exaggerated its influence upon the mind; it is true that a more glorious and glowing day could not have existed; but it is certain that this influence could not have been heightened. Sky, sun, atmosphere, all combined to throw a glamour upon this most bewitching scene, and intoxicate the imagination. The word is not misplaced. It was an intoxication, a dream of delight.

I gazed long upon the scene, finding no words for speech. Then the custodian—whose politeness and attention rendered him worthy

the guardianship of such a treasure—conducted us over the whole ruin, which is of great extent. The view from the summit of the towers is very inferior to that from Goodrich Castle ; but with so much beauty immediately at hand, the eye scarcely desires to wander away. Finally we visited the photograph room, and were unable to resist purchasing a set of large and exquisitely-finished views, exhibiting the castle in every part. Then we took a reluctant leave, hoping to repeat the visit at some not far distant date. No one staying in this neighbourhood, or passing through it, should neglect to make the acquaintance of Raglan Castle. Let the day be clear and sunny, and they will meet with an enjoyment that, of its kind, cannot be surpassed.

Returning to Monmouth, we started for Chepstow immediately after luncheon. In driving along, the river was seldom lost sight of, which pursued its majestic course to the sea. On either hand the wooded hills arose. Now they contracted, now opened out ; now seemed to break up into chains, and now again to unite. Every tint of verdure was there. Here we came upon a wild and rugged spot, there upon a stretch of softest, smiling nature. Now we crossed the river upon a rude, uneven bridge, which seemed to threaten destruction to the whole party, and now pursued our even course beside its cooling waters. Here a house peeped out far up the height, there one nestled in the plain ; now a whole village sprang into life and animation. At length the road turned sharply to the left, and there before us reposed the greatest attraction and wonder of the whole drive—Tintern Abbey.

This ecclesiastical ruin is in exquisite preservation. The roof is gone, but the walls are almost perfect. Nothing can be more romantic than its site, surrounded on all sides by richly-wooded hills, whilst the river runs at its very feet. It is a building of Gothic architecture, dating back to the year 1131. Entering the western doorway, we are lost in wonder at the extent of the building, at its beauty and grace, at the wonderful harmony of its exquisite proportions, at the lightness of much of the work which yet for 700 years has told the course of time and witnessed the history of the world. Some of the columns and pillars are still standing, perfect in their beauty. If the word can be admitted, it would be impossible to find a ruin of more refined loveliness. You feel yourself in the presence of a pile once devoted to sacred objects. Its influence upon the mind is that of a grand old sermon, so directly does it seem to speak to the soul of the things that belong to our peace : the ravages of time, its chances and changes; that world whither its old Cistercian monks have, centuries ago, been summoned.

The most witching time to see this wonderful ruin is said to be by the light of a full moon on a bright night. It is easy to fancy that the imagination would then play strange tricks with us. A distant bell strikes midnight. Passing through the doorway into the interior, the

weird shadows may be noticed thrown by the walls, by the windows, by the delicate tracery. In and out of these shadows we picture to ourselves a ghostly procession of monks, who were living, animated men 700 years ago. With slow step they glide along, bearing the weight of years, noiseless in their tread, speechless. We watch them flitting slowly through the north doorway. A cloud obscures the moon for a moment; the shadows and phantoms vanish. But not so vanishes our recollection of Tintern, as we saw it that day beneath the more healthy influence of a brilliant sun. We lingered as long as time permitted, and then continued our way towards Chepstow, the horses freshened by their short rest.

On, and onwards; past the Wind Cliff, which unfortunately we did not then ascend; until at last we entered the quaint, hilly, beautifully situated town of Chepstow.

Here, too, the sitting-rooms were all occupied, and bedrooms only could be obtained at the hotel. But the coffee-room was large and pleasant and almost deserted.

We sat at tea, when the calm that is said to precede a storm was broken in upon. A rushing, rustling noise heralded the entrance of three tourists. A lady first, in a pink muslin crossbarred with yellow stripes, shot in upon us like a bombshell. Six feet in height, and breadth in proportion. Head-dress blue ribbons and feathers. Voice powerful. Following meekly in her wake came a very small, wizened old gentleman, perfectly bald: by his shrinking look one might have fancied his hair had at some time been frightened off. The daughter came behind him. The great lady had a monstrous fan, which served the double purpose of cooling her fevered brows and keeping her lord in order.

"Waitar," she cried out at once in the highest of tones; "waitar, which is our table? I ordered one to be prepared for us. Is dinner ready? I am positively expiring of hunger."

The waiter had backed in awe. He went across the room and showed a table laid for three.

"The wine card, waitar," said the lady as she seated herself. "I am positively expiring of thirst."

The waiter rushed to obey the order. A shriek arrested him half way, and brought him back again.

"Waitar! waitar! this dreadful animal! How dare you seat me at a table with animals! I shall expire with fright."

The expiring lady theatrically rose in her chair. The waiter hastened to the rescue, and quietly removed an offending earwig. The lady shook down her ruffled feathers, and clutched the wine card.

"Always the same!" she exclaimed contemptuously, glancing at the list. "Clarets, burgundies, champagnes, port, sherry. Nothing new, nothing out of the way. Waitar, have you no Imperial Tokay?"

"Imperial Tokay, ma'am?" cried the bewildered man. "I—I really don't know. But I'll ask the cook," he added, evidently mistaking the nature of the article.

"The cook!" cried she, violently agitating her fan. "Bless the man, what a fool he is! Where can he come from? But there! it's of no use consulting that card. Bring me a quart bottle of Bass's ale, waitar. After that, a bottle of champagne, iced. I'm positively expiring of heat."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the waiter. "And—and the gentleman?"

"The gentleman!" with scornful reproof. "My husband always takes what I take. Now go about your business and obey my orders. Bring the ale in double-quick time; I'm expiring with fatigue."

Next the lady brought forth a letter from her pocket, broke the seal, and proceeded to read it aloud pro bono publico. From sundry hints it contained, we found the tourists inhabited that portion of the metropolis that lies in an easterly direction from Mayfair, and were now taking their pleasure down the Wye.

"Oh, that woman!" cried E., as soon as she had got upstairs. "How did you all keep your countenances? Let us go out and get rid of the impression."

We sauntered forth in the twilight of the evening, and made acquaintance with the town, which is built on the west bank of the Wye, very near its confluence with the Severn, amidst scenery of the most romantic description. At Chepstow the Wye changes its character. Hitherto it has been a river devoted to pleasure-seekers—with the exception of the barges that now and then go up to Hereford; but from Chepstow Bridge the river is navigable for larger vessels, and consequently it assumes a more commercial and more prosy aspect. The tide here runs in with great rapidity, rises often above fifty feet, and has been known to rise as much as seventy. It is said that in a certain garden there is a well which ebbs and flows inversely with the ebb and flow of the tide. When the tide is at its height the well is perfectly dry, and soon after the ebb the water returns. The well is thirty-two feet deep, and holds frequently fourteen feet of water.

The castle on the banks of the river is a ruin of singular beauty, founded, in the eleventh century, by the Earl of Hereford. In the thirteenth century the greater part of the original structure was taken down, and a larger and finer one erected. Here Henry Marten, one of the judges of Charles I., was confined for twenty years. Here, too, Jeremy Taylor was imprisoned in 1656. The castle, equally with the ruins of Tintern and Raglan, belongs to the Duke of Beaufort.

The next morning, as soon as we had breakfasted, we drove to the Wind Cliff. The magnificent view from its summit must not be passed over. Unfortunately this morning it was misty, and much of its extent was concealed. The cliff is about 800 feet above the level of the river. Even though misty, it was one of the most splendid views to

be conceived. Immediately before us the great red cliffs presented their rugged faces ; at their feet the silvery river ran. Looking downwards we had an amazing extent of verdure, and longed to creep into the shade of the trees from the hot glaring sunshine. For several miles the river could be traced, winding beneath its picturesque banks and cliffs. To the left was Berkeley Castle ; to the right the town of Chepstow, with its fine ruin ; and beyond it a grand view of the confluence of the Severn and the Wye. Far away, like a silvery patch, we could just see the Bristol Channel, and Penarth Point, near Cardiff, with the Steep and Flat Holmes. There, some time before, one of us had spent a turbulent ten days, tossing and chopping about on the rough water : waiting, not for tide, but for a fair wind to carry the good ship right out to sea on her voyage to the Cape.

Even as we looked the hot sun was dispersing the mist, and each moment brought some more distant object into view. But time was passing, and we could not wait for the full grandeur to be revealed. With the veil half raised we left it, and soon found ourselves back in Chepstow. Here a catastrophe awaited us.

At Monmouth A. had proved as good as her word, and having expended as much in China—old Worcester, old Delft, old Dresden—as would have repaired for a whole month the ravages of an hotel bill, the treasure was carefully packed in a wine case, and, upon leaving, as carefully placed in the carriage. At Chepstow, the case being somewhat cumbersome, the head waiter begged permission to place it in an alcove in the hall, promising to be answerable for its safety. I weakly yielded to the demand—and paid dearly for the weakness.

About to leave the hotel, I went down in search of the china. It had disappeared. The head waiter was summoned ; the mystery was investigated, and brought to light.

A large picnic party had that morning gone off to Tintern Abbey, carrying with them well-stocked hampers and a large case of champagne. But through some oversight or carelessness of the waiters the champagne had been left in the hall, and the box "of rare and valuable old china" had been taken off in its place !

Our own vexation may easily be imagined. But can the reader picture the dismay, the horror and disgust of the picnic party, who, parched with hot travel and dusty roads, burning for a draught of refreshing, sparkling wine, broke open the case and found—nothing but a collection of what, to them doubtless would seem, the ugliest plates, jars, and teapots the whole universe contained !

We, of course, trembled for our prize—trembled lest the rage of the whole party, taking an insane bent, should send back our china in a very multiplied and fragmentary form.

Nothing could be done. It was small consolation to remonstrate with the head waiter, who in his turn shifted the blame on anyone but

himself, including the boots. Leaving directions with the landlady to have it carefully forwarded to the Ludlow station, we departed.

The result of this unlucky mistake was that the box in due time reached Ludlow. When opened half the contents were found to have escaped, half to have fallen victims. Handles and spouts were lying slaughtered. And A. fell back, in consolation, upon the convenient theory that cracked and mended china becomes more valuable by the process.

"You are rightly punished," was all the consolation I received as we went through Chepstow, "for giving in to that stupid waiter. It was running a most imprudent risk."

"For my own part," added E., "I don't one bit regret the china. It was the ugliest collection of eccentric curiosities I ever beheld. But if our bonnets on their road to Worcester share a similar fate, I for one shall not stir from the hotel to-morrow."

And doubtless she would have been as good as her word.

The train passed over the bridge in the very midst of the exquisite surrounding scenery, which is more like a dream than reality, and pursued its way to Gloucester. Here we spent a few hours with the cathedral, which is of far greater beauty than that of Hereford. Then onwards again, until at length we found ourselves at Worcester, and in the comfortable quarters of the Star Hotel. Here we were fortunate. They had reserved their best rooms for us; and in the end we found their charges just and reasonable: a fact worth chronicling.

One of the first questions from the ladies concerned the luggage. It had arrived in safety. The bonnets were in pristine preservation. This information visibly raised their spirits; and a glance of triumph out of three pairs of eyes informed me that *some* people managed things better than others who trusted to the tender mercies of head waiters. I found nothing to reply. It was Saturday night, and the town, up to a late hour, was noisy with bustle and traffic.

Sunday morning, with its repose and peace, and the service at the cathedral, which we had not seen since its complete restoration. The exterior of Worcester Cathedral has little to recommend it. It is somewhat heavy, dull, plain, and unadorned; guiltless of gurgoyles, flying buttresses, or delicate tracery of any description. But how describe the sight that burst upon the view on passing through the north doorway into the interior? It seemed almost that we beheld a vision, not an earthly scene. Some people have found fault with the restoration, declaring it to be not in the best taste, too ornamental, not sufficiently severe. To us it appeared perfect; and I could almost venture to assert that no cathedral in England can now rival the interior of Worcester.

For the night service it was lighted up; and, as the preacher observed in his sermon, the sight seemed to be more that of a heavenly vision than an earthly reality. This service was held in the nave, but the lay-

clerks and choristers occupied their proper seats in the chancel, which, partially lighted, threw a dim religious light upon the surrounding gloom and was to the last degree effective. Gazing from a distance upon the singers clothed in their white surplices, listening to their voices, "in the pealing anthem swelling the note of praise," it was quite possible and pardonable to close the eyes in a semi-dream, and imagine oneself transported to a higher, holier, and brighter sphere.

The organist officiated at the great new organ on the south side, and after service we begged him to prolong his voluntary. He kindly did so for very many minutes, much to the indignation of the bedesmen, who wanted to be gone. With the dying echoes of the grand harmonies that had swelled in ebb and flow through the arches and fretted vaults of the cathedral, we passed out into the darkness. Worcester may indeed consider itself favoured in possessing within its boundaries this gem of surpassing beauty.

The next morning E. started for Fairford, where she was overdue; but not without a second contretemps, far more alarming to her than that of the missing china.

On reaching the station such a crowd and confusion surely was never witnessed. The platforms were thronged, and no porters were to be seen. The station-master, we were afterwards told, was away for his holiday; and perhaps the men were (practically) taking holiday also. One was found at length, and received his orders—to label the young lady's luggage for Fairford, but to keep me in sight whilst I took the ticket. Instead of doing so, he disappeared with boxes, parasols, rugs, cloaks, and was seen no more. The train was due, but the luggage and the man had vanished.

E.'s dismay may be imagined. The representative of the station-master was demanded, and appeared; and he did all he could do. He delayed the train (an express) nearly fifteen minutes; he went, and sent about, looking for the man and the luggage. All in vain. E. went off minus her possessions, leaving me to clear up the mystery.

Now began the search in earnest. After some trouble, every porter being summoned to appear, the man presented himself. Where he had been hidden did not transpire; but he had sent the luggage off by the Kidderminster train, putting it, he said, in the guard's van; and to that town of carpets it was then on its road. The telegraph was set to work, and matters were made straight as soon as they could be.

To the china factory we proceeded next, inspected the works, and became acquainted with the whole process of manufacturing: one of great interest. Some of the beauties of the show-room proved too tempting for A.'s love of china, which appears to embrace modern as well as ancient specimens; and it was only after a threat of insolvency that she could be induced to relinquish a dessert service of exquisite workmanship but fabulous price.

Bidding farewell to Worcester and its attractions, after lunch, we reached Hereford in time for afternoon service. In vain I endeavoured not to draw comparisons between the two cathedrals. An hour spent with a friend, and we were off again on the final stage of our journey—Ludlow.

We had a long and exquisite drive home from Ludlow in the cool of the evening. As we turned in at old Charlotte's lodge gates, and came in sight of the grand old Court, we acknowledged that since our departure we had seen nothing finer or more perfect of its kind.

It was, after all, without regret that we found ourselves at rest. Much had been seen in a very few days; much of such marvellous beauty that it now appeared as a dream. Time was required to live over again and digest it. All who have seen this portion of the Wye well know that no description can possibly come up to the reality. Those who have not will thank us—not for pointing out to them beauties that are household words amongst us—but for inducing them, it may be, to go and do likewise: to become acquainted themselves with a spot that, in its own way, is scarcely to be surpassed in the world.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

"THY WILL, NOT MINE, BE DONE."

OH! not when we are weary;
Oh! not when we are sad;
Oh! not when we are downcast,
May that sweet rest be had.
But when the Lord sees best,
When Jesus bids us come,
Then shall we find our perfect rest—
In that, our heavenly home.

Not when our earthly trial
Seems more than we can bear;
Not when our heart is fainting
In unbelieving fear;
Not then—oh, no, not then!
Times are not ordered thus;
A wisdom far beyond our ken
Is planning all for us.

Not when our heart is sickening
With hope so long deferred;
Oh! not in that sad hour
May our request be heard:
What though the way seem dark
And hope to ring its knell?—
God's ways are not as ours,
He doeth all things well.

We may not be impatient—
We may not long to go,
For He hath labour for us,
That we must do below;
A fight that must be fought,
A course that must be run,
To bring Him captive every thought
Ere He will say, Well done!

We need not faint or tire
At the trials of a day;
We have His great example
To cheer us on our way.
And oh! 'twill not be long;
The victory will be won;
In our great Captain we are strong—
The fight will soon be done.

We need not look before us,
At the troubles that may come;
It may be ere they reach us,
We shall be safe at home.
But let it not concern us:
The Lord God knoweth best.
His hand will guide us to Him,
And we shall rest—shall rest.

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

THE waves are rolling in slowly; the rows of cottages and the one hotel are bathed in an unbroken and a garish flood of light; the beach is dotted with the usual specimens of "the human form divine" that one sees at the sea-shore; while the inevitable small child trots around ubiquitously, overshadowed by a large amount of hat, and displaying an amazing brevity of skirt, and much (oh, very much!) of bare, mottled leg.

Lastly, here am I, uncomfortably seated on a pile of wood, the centre of a swarm of gnats, trying to look as if I enjoyed it, and conscious that I am failing miserably.

It is not one of our populous places, resorted to by fashion; but a little primitive beach, sought by those who require cheapness or privacy.

"If," I meditate, "I could only think of an appropriate poem, perhaps I might be able to get enthusiastic over that dreary sweep of water. There's nothing else for me to do."

Poetry is not my strong point, and I rack my brain for at least three minutes. At last the lines come:

"The sea, the sea, the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the——"

A woman's voice, close at hand, says, "roast veal." What else I hear not, for those two words carry my thoughts forward to dinner. But no—vain hope—dinner is still a thing of the future.

At this point the aforesaid small child sets up a dismal howl, and flies in abject terror from "some dread monster of the deep" (length, one inch and a half) that its grubbing has disinterred. Its fright gives me malicious pleasure; but even that does not last long, and after a long yawn, I rise to go. But at this moment a figure in lilac gingham comes in sight, and I sit down to wait.

She comes along with light, easy steps, and presently she drops down silently beside me. She is a girl of twenty-two, with wavy auburn hair, and a pair of deep-set grey eyes with dark brows and lashes; her mouth is somewhat wide, and her nose short and retroussé; but the lilac gown shows off every curve of a superb figure, and her skin is prettily tinted. Somehow people always look twice at her.

"Well?" I say, lazily interrogative.

"Well?" she echoes. "Look here, Deborah. If I get so bored in this place that I drown myself, just remember, please, that you brought me here."

"W-hy, Ottalie——" I begin, with aggrieved sharpness.

"Perhaps you didn't," she interrupts, contradictorily but placidly. "That is what you are going to say, and I daresay it's true. I *did* want to come to the sea-side; and—and as we had to bury ourselves somewhere, this antediluvian place, Sone, was as good as any other. And the sea is always nice, you know: only,"—her big eyes turn wrathfully seaward—"there is a little too much of it here, and nothing of anything else! Such a caddish set of people could not have collected at any place but Sone."

"As for the people, Ottalie, I had an idea we wanted to avoid society. Besides, Sone is cheap ——"

"And nasty," puts in my sister.

"Why do you indulge in these words, Ottalie? Sone is not bad, though there is no circulating library," I go on; "nothing fit to eat, and no sleep to be had for the gnats." I end by making a frantic lunge at one of the enemy—of course I miss him. I always do. Ottalie laughs.

"Poor old Deb, you are getting on bravely. Novels, eating and sleeping—sure signs of spinsterhood! Don't think I say it reproachfully. I wonder"—clasping her hands fiercely—"why people *ever* marry?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"If aunt Rebecca would only die, and go to heaven," she goes on meditatively, "we should be rich."

"And what if we were rich?"

"We could go away ever so far: where nobody would ever see or find us."

"Afghanistan's a good place," I say dryly.

"Yes!" she says, with a short laugh. "Only aunt Rebecca won't. Though she is not a bit of use down here—except to sing hymns."

"You ought to be ashamed, Ottalie."

"I'm not," she says, cheerfully. "You are always wishing, yourself, that aunt Rebecca was gone somewhere."

I wisely affect not to hear.

"Let us go over to the inlet," she adds, jumping up; "anything's better than sitting here."

The inlet is a small bay, chiefly remarkable for its calmness, solitude, and gnats. But why it should have been named the inlet, nobody seems to know.

"Sometimes I think all this must be a dream," Ottalie says, as we saunter along in the heat. "How things have changed! What a contrast it presents to the days when we were with papa, and he was flourishing. This is a wretched life."

"It is a little better than your life last year, Ottalie."

She turns away quickly; but presently begins to hum a tune. Wretched I know it is for her; but any reference to the past she will

not hear from me. Five minutes later we stand on the edge of the water.

Ottalie points to a small rowing boat. "See," she says, "that boat is what I've been trying to get ever since we came here. We'll borrow it for a little while, Deb."

"Borrow it?"

"Just to sit in," she says, jumping in. "Oh, it is cool and pleasant sitting here! Come in, Deb."

I don't know why I always obey her; she knows that she tyrannises over me. In I get.

"The least little push—so—Deb, will run it off into the water."

The boldness of the assertion locks my lips, and almost before I understand the situation we are skimming away from shore. People have said Ottalie rows well; I know the fact does not comfort me in the least. I close my eyes, and cling to the boat-side.

Ottalie laughs, and begins to sing; so I am left in peace to indulge my fears. I always was a coward on the water.

"*Won't* you put back, Ottalie?"

But Ottalie only smiles, and sings the louder. Presently, I find myself almost a mile out.

"Four o'clock!" I say, drawing out my watch.

"Is it?" Ottalie asks, lazily. "I know what an inquiring mind you have, Deborah, and I am taking you to explore the Isle of Shoals!" Her eyes flash laughter as I expostulate:

"It is dinner-time. At least, it will be by the time we get back."

"My dear Deborah," she says, coolly, backing water, "I am not a well-regulated individual like you; my appetite does not depend on the clock!" And, as she speaks, she runs the boat into land. "Now let us explore," she says, preparing to get out.

"And let the boat drift off?" I ask, tartly.

"No; don't come out; stay where you are," shouts out a strange masculine voice from the shore. We both start.

"Push off," I whisper, nervously. But before Ottalie, with all her dexterity, can obey, a gentleman, with fishing-basket and tackle, comes rushing down, and jumps in.

"My girl," he says to Ottalie, as he takes the seat facing her, "the next time Michael sends you to bring a hungry man back to shore and dinner, please don't make a pleasure excursion of it! Row quickly now, and make up for lost time."

Ottalie's back is towards me, but just as I open my lips to answer, she turns to me a very red face, and makes me a sign to be quiet.

The gentleman lights his cigar, and leans back, fixing his eyes on Ottalie.

"By Jove!" he ejaculates presently, "you are pretty, and no mistake."

I have noticed the best of men think themselves at liberty to speak out to a girl the admiration they only dare look to a lady.

Ottalie glances over her shoulder (with a crimson face) at me again, and once more I hold my tongue. Well, perhaps in the position it was best to be silent. We had brought it upon ourselves.

"I would take the oars myself," he adds, "only I gave my wrist an ugly wrench yesterday; so there can be no more rowing for me yet awhile. Tell your father to send you as long as I am helpless—that is, if you want to come. Do you?"

There is a little pause, and then Ottalie answers, in her old, care-for-nothing tone, "Yes."

I hold my breath; but nothing more is said. He only laughs. So he takes us for "Michael's" daughters, whomsoever he and they may be.

I feel dowdy; I feel that we both look just as Michael's daughters might look. I am not much to boast of on orthodox occasions; but now my hat is over one ear, my cotton gown is rumpled, and I can tell that my nose is red, and my face a mass of freckles. Ottalie is also rumpled. Her lilac sleeves are rolled up, and her hat is lying at my feet. Yes, we might surely sit as models for these mythical daughters of Michael.

Next I look at our "fare." He is tall and broad-shouldered, and clean-limbed; his face is rather square, his features are irregular, and his mouth is covered by a black moustache; he is either very dark or much sunburnt. But there is something in his countenance that I like, something also in his voice, and he has the unmistakable bearing of a well-bred man.

Finding he cannot make Michael's daughters talk with him, he subsides into silence, enjoying his cigar. Then we reach shore.

I scramble out first, before he rises; he follows; then comes Ottalie. Once more on land, my courage revives.

"Tell Michael," he begins——but I interrupt him. In my opinion it is high time the farce should cease.

"You are mistaken, sir," I say, tartly, trying to speak *de haut en bas*. "We are not Michael's daughters."

"Not Michael's daughters!" he repeats. "Then who the dev—I beg your pardon. Then who are you?" But he speaks with a ring of mockery in his tone. What with that, and what with Ottalie's black looks at me, I turn back to speak again.

"We did not go after *you*—to fetch *you*—we knew nothing about you. Ott—this lady got into the boat for pastime, believing it to be at liberty; and she was foolish enough to row over to the opposite side of the inlet. We are ladies."

"Thanks," he answers, staring at both of us, and raising his straw hat. My tones may not have impressed him—perhaps puzzled him; for there is a slighting lightness still in him, and anything but reverence

in his face. "Thanks for your kind exertions," he adds to Ottalie, who blushes furiously, and makes no reply.

Raising his hat again, he walks his way, and we walk ours. Glancing back, I see a man in rough costume approach him.

"Good gracious, that must be Michael!" I say. "He will want to charge us for the boat."

Ottalie turns upon me savagely. "Deborah, you are an idiot! Had you only held your tongue, he would never have found us out—never. What does it matter if he did take us for the boat-girls?"

"Had you not better tell me it was my fault we took the boat at all?" I retort. "I wish you would not do these things."

"What a good-looking man he is!"

We walk home in silence, for I don't answer her. Ottalie hates reproach, but she is a little ashamed of the escapade herself.

In time we learn that the stranger's name is Daine; he is apparently well-to-do, and is supposed to have come to this little out-of-the-world place, Sone, for a spell of quietness. He lives at the hotel, pays liberally, and "keeps himself to himself," occupying his time with boating and fishing. It is I who hear these items of news, and I try to impart them to Ottalie, but she will not listen. Meanwhile, if by chance we meet the stranger, he lifts his hat in silence, and gazes at Ottalie as he passes. Probably, just as we have heard his name, he has heard ours, and knows that we are not Michael's daughters, but the Miss Peyres. And each time this meeting occurs, Ottalie's blushes grow more ridiculous. It makes me angry with her.

Three Sundays come and go. On the fourth we see our schoolboy cousin, Keith Harland, who has come down to Sone with his mother. Mrs. Harland looks frostily blue, and does not even give us the tips of her fingers to shake. Of course, she did not know we were at Sone, for we do not enlighten the world as to our movements. Her dead husband was our mother's cousin; so the relationship to her is not much; but what it is she is ashamed of. The scrambling, moving-about, shady kind of life that Ottalie and I lead does not enhance our worth in her eyes. Lead it we must, however, until the end comes and the "finis" is said. And then? Well, perhaps, in the Great Hereafter Ottalie and I may attain to respectability.

On Monday morning Keith comes rushing into our lodgings, all excitement.

"I say, Ottalie, what do you think?" he cries. "Who *do* you think is here?"

"Who is?" asks she, from her place on the music stool.

"Jasper Daine. I have just seen him."

Ottalie strums away and does not answer. She is as red as the poppies outside.

"Who is Jasper Daine?" I question.

"A regular brick," responds Keith. "He was at College with Tom ages ago, and he came over to see Tom last autumn and get some shooting. He has a nice place of his own."

"And is well off?"

"Well off! I wish I was likely to be half as well. He is going to take me out fishing this afternoon. I told him you two were here, and that you were my cousins."

I draw the boy to me as Ottalie leaves the room, and look into his eyes, speaking impressively:

"Keith, you must take care. *No tales out of school, you know, about past troubles.*"

At first the lad, gazing hard at me with his honest eyes, scarcely seems to understand. And I add, "For Ottalie's sake."

"Why, Deb, I hope you don't think there's need to caution me on that score," he says, promptly and half indignantly. "My mother would skin me, I expect, if I could talk about *that*. And serve me right, too!"

Sitting on the bench in our solitary cottage garden at sunset, I see two figures coming across the sands. Can Keith be going to bring that man here? How stupid the lad is!

Yes, on they come, and inside the gate.—Keith eager as the school-boy he is, the other already lifting his straw hat respectfully. Ottalie rises deliberately, turns her back, and looks over the side palings.

"Mr. Daine, Miss Peyre," cries the lad, making the introduction after the manner of his elders. "And this is her sister," he adds, pulling Ottalie round by the arm. "Ottalie, here's Mr. Daine."

Ottalie and I bow stiffly; she puts on her coldest manner, comes back to her seat, and takes it. Mr. Daine sits down, facing us, in a small iron chair. Keith climbs the trunk of the big tree and lodges himself amid the branches. He begins telling of their fishing expedition in the afternoon, and what they caught and did not catch, which leads us on to general conversation. In the midst of it appears the small servant maid.

"Tea is waiting, ma'am," she says to me.

What can I do but ask the intruder to take some tea? We all go into the sitting-room together. I place myself before the table; they range themselves at the open windows. Ottalie's beautiful grey eyes glance up at him ever and anon through their long dark lashes as he talks to her.

"Now, is he not a jolly brick?" demands Keith, as Mr. Daine says good night and leaves.

"Very," cries Ottalie, sarcastically.

"I can tell you, Ottie, all the girls down with us thought so. Not that *he* thinks much of women," adds Master Harland. "He does not

take to them. And now I must go, or my mother will be outrageous. I dined with him at the hotel—such a jolly dinner!"

"Well, this is very pretty!" I cry, as the boy disappears. "That insolent man, of all others, to make friends with us!"

"Why did you give him tea?" says Ottalie.

"Give him tea! could I help it? And for you to talk so freely with him, Ottalie! I did hope you had learned prudence ——"

"I did hope you had learned prudence," mimics Ottalie. "Mark me, Deborah; if anything upsets our equanimity, our domestic calm, you will have brought it upon yourself."

"Go on, go on, child."

But she does not go on. She turns to the piano, and begins the first bars of the old French song:—

"Partant pour la Syrie, le jeune et brave Dunois."

"Women and moths," I murmur. "She has singed herself once, and she'd like to flutter near the flame again." And I take up the bedroom candlestick.

Day: Sunday. Time: five o'clock on a sultry afternoon. Dramatis personæ: Ottalie, myself, and Jasper Daine, who has just unlatched the gate and is sauntering towards us. Ottalie is on the bench under the tree. I am in the room, looking from the window.

"Been fishing?" she asks, laconically, as he drops down by her side, and nods to me. Fishing! how irreverent she is.

"No," he says. "I have been boring myself with myself. After inflicting my company on you in the morning, I had not the face to come any sooner; and while I was thrown on my own resources I came to the conclusion that, in point of dulness, Sone and church are about on a par."

I am getting used to this man and *his* cynical irreverence; but this last startles me, so that I exclaim in reproof. He turns to give me an amused look.

"As usual, I have shocked Miss Peyre," he says. "But ——"

At this point Ottalie's glove drops. He picks it up, and goes on in his lazy, indifferent manner with some explanation to soften his words away. Then he raises the glove to his lips.

"Violet is my favourite colour and favourite perfume," he coolly says. "Is it also yours, Ottalie?"

He calls her Ottalie for the first time in *my* hearing. It is only five Sundays since Keith introduced him to us, yet he calls her Ottalie.

As the aborigines reckoned the flight of time by the moon, so we of Sone reckon it by our solitary landmark—the Sabbath. Keith Harland and his haughty mother have gone again. My thoughts wander off on Ottalie's affairs, and just as I come to the conclusion that she was sent into this world for the sole purpose of ruining my

temper, and getting us both into trouble, his voice startles me—or rather not his voice, but what he says.

"I have called you fast," it says; "even a 'girl of the period.' I never meant to fall in love with you. But yet—I have done it."

There is an odd, half-humourous, half-doubtful tone in the voice; and its owner is clutching Ottalie's two hands. Her head is bent so low, I can only see the outline of a flushed cheek. Apprehension—anger—I hardly know what feeling arouses me.

"Ottalie!"

I may as well call to the moon. She does not hear or heed me. Mr. Daine bends down to her and speaks almost in a whisper. Her eyes—the big, beautiful grey eyes—glance up at him.

In my vexation I retire from the window. In my trouble I walk back to it. Both of them have forgotten my existence.

"Do you know," he goes on, and my ears are quick, "I began by meaning to dislike you. I did not care for a girl who could be fast enough to row a stranger over the bay and personate a boatman's daughter. Ottalie, how did you subdue my prejudices?—How did you get the better of me? Are you a witch?"

Mr. Daine is certainly an odd lover, if he means it for love, and woos after a fashion of his own; but Ottalie does not seem to object. As he bends to her, the wind stirs her pretty hair, and the water comes rolling in slowly over the sunshiny sand—poor, foolish Ottalie.

"You are a witch, perhaps," he says, after a pause. "On my life I cannot tell! I only know one thing—I love you!"

"Really and truly do you love me? Really and truly?" asks she, childishly twisting her fingers together, as she rises to her feet, and looks up at him.

"Better than life!" he answers, and takes both the hands in his. Dismay had held my breath, but I call now.

"Ottalie!"

He hears that, and looks round. She goes and looks out at the murmuring sea. At that moment the maid comes in with the tea-tray, cake, and bread-and-butter. We dine early on Sundays.

"Come in to tea," I call out, in desperate hope of putting an end to their folly.

But no; just as though my words were wind, they regard them not. Opening the gate, they stroll off together across the sands. I take my tea alone, with a sinking heart. How intensely foolish Ottalie is!

The wildest imagination could not, I fear, picture Deborah Peyre as a "praying woman." Of course I go to church; I go this evening. I have called myself a miserable sinner scores of times; now I feel I am one, or that she is, or he is; or that we are all sinners together. I get into a back pew, and I believe I pray. I try to pray; more earnestly perhaps than I had ever tried in my life. And after the service is

over I go home and wait. I see two dusky figures pacing the sands together just beyond the gate, and I fold my hands tightly and wait.

The gate clicks at last. Ottalie comes in, and stands blinking in the doorway, half dazzled by the light.

"Will you condescend to tell me how you intend to wind up the highly creditable farce you are playing?" I cry, in helpless rage.

"Wind—it—up," she repeats, the brightness fading all at once out of her face. Then with a sudden dash of recklessness: "I don't know. I don't think it's a bad plan, Deb. I let myself drift—drift—drift. It is so much easier!" And she laughs a strained little laugh that cannot take the shadow out of her eyes.

"Understand this much," say I; "if you do not put an end to this, *I* will."

She gets as white as her dress, and seizes my arm.

"No, oh, no! Deborah, you are joking; *only* joking, are not you?" And she drops my arm, and sinks on her knees beside me.

"Am I given to joking?"

"But you won't," she repeats. "I will—do what you want—only not now, Deborah, not now! Let me be happy, *please*, just a little while. Do you grudge me these few days, because my life has been so happy?"

I am silent. She clasps my arm to hasten my reply.

"Have I had so happy a life, Deborah?"

Heaven knows that she has not—of late years. But how shall I answer her? What am I to do? In one sense of the word I am at rest; she has too much rectitude, too much pride to give cause for real fear; but—there are complications.

"Deborah, dear Deborah, won't you promise me?" and her voice breaks, and the firm white arm creeps up round my neck, as her eyes peer into mine. "You will not—tell?"

How shall I answer her?

"Deborah, dear Deborah," she cries again, putting her lips close to my cheek.

How still the room is as her voice falls. How quiet it is outside—how quiet!

"No," I say, shortly; "I will not tell. Unless I am forced to it, Ottalie; understand that."

After a little, she gets up and goes towards the door. I follow her.

"Ottalie," I begin. She stops and looks over her shoulder, half-angrily, half-entreatingly.

"Hush," she says. "I am *forgetting* it—*that*. You said I might be happy—just a *little* while."

"Then," I say, bewildered out of my equanimity, "you will be the first person who was ever made happy by acting a lie."

Ottalie turns a scared face upon me, moans, and escapes from the room.

What a culpable woman I am! Bribed with a kiss to promise! But—poor Ottalie! And what a reckless, miserable mood she is in! I hear her voice ringing out overhead: "*Et l'ivresse, l'ivresse, l'ivresse et l'amour!*"

Not an exalted sentiment, is it, reader?—and for Sunday night! Well, she learnt it in a hard school, this poor Ottalie of mine.

I toss and turn my night away. Ottalie, I fancy, does the same. When she sits down to breakfast her face is pale, her eyes are encircled by purple rings. We scarcely speak to one another.

Later, I come into the room again with my things on, look at her, and wait.

"I am not going out," she says; so I leave her sitting at the window. If she is happy, she is a better actress than I thought—she hides it so well.

For three hours do I poke jelly-fish with the end of my sunshade. But jelly-fish are phlegmatic, and the sun is hot. In the course of time it becomes monotonous, and I rise and go homeward.

As I close our gate I hear Jasper Daine's voice. Sometimes it has struck me as being musical, but now it fairly sets my teeth on edge. What does it all mean? Has she told him herself? Well, it may be better, I think, as I walk in. Ottalie is bolt upright near the piano; and Mr. Daine is tramping up and down the room. He comes to a sudden pause before me.

"What is the matter?" I ask, not in the least because I require information. I think he guesses this, for he eyes me in an extremely unpleasant way.

"The matter! It is this," he says in his harsh voice: "last night I was led to believe your sister would be my affianced wife; nay, that she was. To-day, when I ask about our wedding-day, she tells me she is already—*married*. That is all that is the matter, Miss Peyre."

I untie my hat-strings and sit down; I have not the least idea what else to do.

"Forgive me," she says, or rather moans, coming a few steps nearer him, with a scared, pitiful face.

"For drawing me on! For making a fool of me! For allowing me to love you as I have never loved mortal yet! And when I know not whether to believe this strange assertion, and ask what your name is—and why, if you are married, you have let me call you Miss Peyre, Miss Ottalie—you refuse to speak! Madam, I appeal to you," he adds, turning fiercely to me, "is this the way to treat a gentleman? Have I, or have I not, a right to ask an explanation?"

"Tell him, Deborah; tell him *all*," she says, trembling.

But I hold my peace stubbornly. I feel angry with everything and everybody. Her own folly led her into this; let her get out of it as she can.

He stands, waiting for me to speak. Ottalie gives a great sob, which disarms me. In spite of myself I begin, and give him the outlines of the tale.

Our father was Major Peyre, of the — Regiment. He was not a good man; to say the least of it, not a judicious one. He drank and he gambled. After our mother's death Ottalie and I were quite in his power. One of his gambling friends, to whom he became largely indebted, cast his covetous eyes on Ottalie, who was but a young girl, shy and inexperienced. My father gave her to him in marriage. Before two months were over, my father died. Mr. Daine, who possibly knows Major Peyre by reputation, may remember what his death was. Before the year was out, that man—Ottalie's husband—fell into trouble and crime. He was tried for it—tried, Mr. Daine, and reader—and he is now working out his sentence in prison. Can anyone wonder that we seek to hide our heads?

Mr. Daine, standing with folded arms and shortened breath, inquires what the man's name was.

"Joyce, Walter Joyce," I say, "ex-captain. Once, by courtesy, gentleman."

"Walter Joyce!" he exclaims, staring at her. "And you are *his* wife? Heaven help you!"

She wrings her hands, and looks up at him with wide, tearless eyes. All her coquetries are gone, all her pretty, bewildering looks and smiles.

"Forgive me," she says, humbly.

"Never!" The word seems to be wrung from the depth of a despairing heart. "Knowing all this, why could you not have let me alone?" he asks—"have checked me when you saw what you were becoming to me?"

"Because I—I grew to care for you," she says, in her recklessness, her white lips smiling faintly. "Because I never knew what happiness was until you came. I was very wicked, I know; Deborah there is thinking me more wicked still for avowing it. But this is the end of all."

In her sad eyes stands the ghost of the dead and gone past. Mr. Daine, looking down upon her with strange compassion, catches up his breath with a sob.

"Jasper, Jasper! Only forgive me!"

The silence is dreadful. I can't bear these scenes; I was not made for them. Her head falls in despair. All in a moment he folds her to him.

"If that be true, if you do love me, why, then, all may be well. Why

should *he* stand between us?—that base, bad man who has wrecked your life?"

I put out my hand, aghast. Ottalie, aghast too, turns her white face to him inquiringly.

"Don't you see that it is not an ordinary case?" he asks. "What does it signify——that a few carping Puritans may carp at it? Ottalie, my dear one, come with me! I can make you happy now and always."

He waves me aside. I stand aside, and wait. It seems to me like an eternity; but I know I can trust Ottalie.

She frees herself slowly from him. "Good-bye, dear love," she whispers.

"Good-bye?" he echoes. "What do you mean? You cannot, you *will* not, send me away, Ottalie ——"

"I am *his*—wife," she whispers, drawing a long, quivering breath.

"It is a pity you did not remember that sooner," he says, his angry mood returning. But the next moment he is drawing her to him again. "Remembered it before you played with me."

"I know it," she says, humbly. "But if I played with you it was dangerous play; for—I think I have wounded myself to death."

"Ottalie, forgive me," he cries; "I think I am going mad. Ottalie ——"

"No, no, no! don't tempt me, please," she sobs, leaving him where he stands. "Go, Mr. Daine; *please* go, for all is over. And I would ask you to forget me if—but no, don't forget me quite," she breaks off, with a cry of pain; "not quite, not quite. Only try not to—to blame me more than you can help."

Her tears break out at last between the dry sobs. His only answer is to snatch her to him and kiss her frantically—her face, her slender hands, even her hair.

"Go," she gasps out; "*please* go, Jasper."

And go he does. And the next morning, before Sone is well astir, Ottalie and I and our boxes go off like the shame-faced things we are.

The sea-shore again. More sand and fewer houses than at Sone; we are a hundred miles from that delectable spot. Sone was not much; but this—who shall describe its dreariness? Sometimes I think I cannot bear it. It is the fag-end of the world; hardly anything but the lighthouse to see. Weeks have passed since we came; the signs of winter are at hand. What shall we do when winter comes? I am sitting on the doorstep, and Ottalie is walking up and down as if she had been wound up and warranted to go so many hours; her eyes are fastened on the sea, and her long grey skirt stirs the leaves that lie dead on the path.

"I'd just as soon be in my grave as here," I groan—for in truth all things wear a cruel aspect to me to-day.

Ottalie stops to speak. "Deborah, don't! please, don't. We must stay here. It is a safe retreat; no one knows it. I—sometimes I fear I am not a good woman; that you know I am not. I am afraid to risk temptation again. Sometimes I wonder whether, if *he*"—her voice sinks, and she turns her pale, thin face towards me—"if he were to find me and ask me the same thing, I should have the strength to say no again. Oh, my mother, if you were but living now!" she adds, clasping her hands, and taking up her weary tramp again.

It is the first time she has alluded to Jasper Daine. The thought exasperates me. I must be getting ill-tempered out of sheer weariness.

"I warned you in time, Ottalie. Did I not tell you how it must end?"

"Yes, I know all that; it is no one's fault but mine," she answers, as her eyes wander out seaward again. The eyes have dark circles perpetually now, and her pretty face has lost its bloom. As a gust of wind lifts her hair I see how sharpened its outline has become.

How dreary this is! And, what is drearier still, every day brings us nearer to that of Captain Joyce's release. And then? Will he find us here? Will she die of it? Oh, Ottalie, Ottalie! If I am cross, it is for her sake.

To and fro still she tramps. I sit on, with my despair, and watch the smoke from the coastguard cottage chimneys curl up against the grey sky, and the last leaves from the solitary row of poplar-trees fall off in the wintry wind.

And this is our life. How long will it last? I ask the question of myself as the faint, red sun gleams out for a moment beyond the lighthouse, and then sinks to its rest; sinks, only to rise again on the morrow, to rise and set on many countless to-morrows. How long? How long?

The sea-gulls flap into shore, screeching angrily, and the waves, the sad sea waves, come creeping in slowly over the sands, with a sad, sullen moan, in and in, until the faint colour left by the sun is gone, and night is upon us. And all night long I lie on my pillow and listen to the waves, and cannot sleep.

The morning brings a letter. A letter for us! Only one individual in the wide world, so far as I know, is cognisant of our address: the friendly old lawyer, once a relative of my dead mother's, through whom we get our small income transmitted periodically. What can he have to say? It is only the middle of the quarter. Ottalie, seated opposite to me at the breakfast-table, glances at it with some faint curiosity.

"Old Weston must have gone in early," she remarks, alluding to the distant post-town.

"He had to fetch something betimes for the lighthouse."

The letter is addressed to me, and I open it. As I glance at its

contents, a mist gathers before my sight, and I turn sick and faint. Is it right to be glad at a fellow-creature's death? I know not.

"What is the matter, Deborah?"

"News. It concerns you."

"Concerns me?"

"Yes. Someone is dead."

She gazes at me with parted lips. "Not ——" she begins, and stops.

"Yes, he is dead. Your husband has died in prison."

I don't quite remember how we get through the day, except that we hardly exchange two words. What Ottalie feels I know not. *I* am thankful.

"Why, there's a stranger!" I exclaim in wonder, as I discern some tall man marching down the rugged pathway at evening. A gentleman, too. We had not seen anything of the kind in the place before.

Ottalie raises her eyes languidly, and looks out. *She* knows him in spite of the twilight, and she stands up and locks her fingers one within the other in her emotion.

He comes in: Jasper Daine. His form fills up the doorway. Opening his arms, Ottalie falls into them. And I and he do what we can, both, to still her hysterical sobbing.

"You see, Miss Peyre," he says to me, "Fate has been kinder to us than —— "

"Than you deserve," I put in.

"Quite so. But, as my wife, I will endeavour to shield her in future from life's troubles and storms. You shall enjoy peace and rest if I can give them to you, my darling Ottalie."

And the sad sea waves did not sound to me that night so sadly as they had done. Poor weary Ottalie! The dark past was over for her; hope was dawning; she might be light-hearted once more, even in this world.

M. M. W.

OUR MIDDY.

THAT was the name Harry Grenville was known by all through the village. High and low, rich and poor, called that boy "Our Middy." He was the darling of everybody.

His mother is the widow of the squire of the parish, and I am the clergyman's wife. I have known Mrs. Grenville intimately since my marriage, which followed immediately on my husband being presented to the Vicarage of Grenford. We had been engaged for ten years, hoping for a living to marry on; and at last, when I was thirty, and had given up hoping for *something* by every post, came the wonderful news, only a few lines—he was vicar of Grenford, through Mr. Grenville, an old college friend.

Down on my knees I went and thanked God first. Then I looked at myself in the glass. What a worn, faded-looking thing for a bride; and I had been so fresh and fair ten years ago! After that I went downstairs and told my aunt, who had given me a home for many years.

"At last, Carry," she said, "at last! Well, dear, I hope you'll be happy. You might have been Mrs. Hunt the last eight years, you know, and all those five little Hunts might have been yours."

"I don't envy Mrs. Hunt the very least, my dear aunt."

"A nice open carriage with red wheels, too, Carry, and a pair of greys. You'll never have more than a pony carriage. And such a perfect establishment; butler, two footmen, and a boy. Oh, dear, I suppose a dozen of each will do, Carry?"

"A dozen, dear aunt! What of, footmen or carriages?"

"Dear Carry, what a jumble you are making. Under-linen, my love, I was speaking of."

"Oh, I beg pardon, aunty; a dozen? I've never had more than six."

"A dozen or fourteen it should be. My dear father always had his things marked one, two, three, up to twelve, and he always insisted on wearing number one shirt with number one socks and number one drawers. It made him quite fidgety if he happened to get number eleven shirt and number seven socks together. Very neat, tidy man he always was. You see, my dear," continued my aunt, pursuing her own train of thought, "you knew Mr. Woodhouse before you knew Mr. Hunt, so he had no chance; your mind was made up; but if Mr. Woodhouse had been Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Hunt been Mr. Woodhouse, I wonder if things would have turned out differently. You would then have known Mr. Hunt the longest. I can't make it out at all. Such china, and such a wonderful cook! I'm so glad I've not worn that

new silk, Carry. Easter was so cold I didn't put it on, and now it will do nicely for my wedding-gown."

"Aunty, are *you* going to be married?" I said, kissing the dear old face. My aunt blushed, and declared I was so upset I could not speak a word of sense.

Well, I was married, and my dear aunt wore the new silk, and we went straight to Grenford on a lovely summer day. Michael's old housekeeper and her niece had been settled there a week beforehand, and the furniture of his bachelor days, with some few additions, was all we had to begin with. But how pretty it all looked when we walked across the fields from the station. The scent of a gloire de dijon rose always recalls that summer evening to me. I never see any so fine as ours. What a strange power flowers and music have—how they bring back with a sudden thrill days that are past, friends who have "gone home to rest," whilst we are still toiling over our task! And when all was quiet and peaceful, Michael took the big key of the church, and we went through the garden, under the lime trees, and into the church, and kneeling again before the altar, prayed our prayers for ourselves and for each other: that now when God had given us our desire He might not send *leanness* withal into our souls.

Within the year Mr. Grenville died, and it was after his death that my acquaintance with Mrs. Grenville deepened into friendship and affection. She was as nearly perfect as I imagine any human being can be; one of the few who can always be showering benefits on others without making them feel under obligations. It was such a pleasure to her to do a kindness, it almost seemed as if a hearty appreciation of it made *her* the one who was obliged. I never saw anything so beautiful as her manner in a cottage, and the whole parish adored her.

Harry was like his mother, and the most loving and lovable boy I ever met. He was always in mischief, yet everyone loved him. He painted my large white cat to look like a tiger, and the poor animal had to be killed; but there were floods of tears, and the only punishment I inflicted was not letting him dig the hole and superintend the burial.

He was a clever lad, though never given to study overmuch. He was very fond of music. He did not inherit this from his mother; and his guardian, an old-fashioned sort of unmusical man, objected strongly to his learning. It led young men into low society, he thought. Such a mistake! I am certain music is a talent to foster in a boy. Harry would sit quiet by the hour when I was playing, and I was the culprit who taught him. And wonderful progress he made.

It was a sort of secret from his mother which she was well aware of all the time. I never shall forget one Sunday afternoon when Harry ventured to perform on the grand pianoforte in the drawing-room. I happened to be in the garden with Mrs. Grenville when the sounds of "Campdown Racecourse," and "Slap Bang," reached us. His

mother turned, half shocked, half amused, and entering by the open window, she said in a reproachful tone, "My dear Harry, I cannot have such tunes on Sunday."

"That is hard lines," said Harry, turning round on the music stool, "when I've had the trouble of finding out the chords, and put Amen to it, like they do to the hymns in church!"

From a child he always said he would be a sailor, and nothing else would satisfy him. He passed the examination, and returned home in triumph and in uniform; two years in the training-ship and a year at sea. He was sixteen now, grown and sunburnt, improved in every way. The first Sunday when he joined our choir, absorbed in the music, and singing like a bird, I thought I never had seen a more beautiful young face: and his high, clear voice was glorious in the dear old hymn, "Crown Him Lord of all."

How happy mother and son were for those few weeks! Harry was devoted to her; all his life she had been his friend and companion, and shared every thought.

"I hope to get the Humane Society's medal, mother, some day."

"Yes, my boy, I hope you may," said Mrs. Grenville.

"And the Victoria Cross, mother! Oh, I must get that; you would like me to get that?"

"Yes, my boy," she answered, but there was a far-away look in her eyes, as if petitioning the Great Captain to cover his curly head in the day of battle.

And he visited all the cottages and told them all he had seen, and everyone admired him, and half the lads wished to go with him when he went to sea again in October, 1869. He only returned last summer as a sub-lieutenant. Such a happy meeting! Dear Mrs. Grenville said it almost made amends for his long absence. And then he fell in love with my young cousin, Helen Wood, who was staying with us. There is something so taking in the earnest simplicity of a boy's love, so different from anything else; and I never treated it as a serious thing, for I knew Helen, besides being several years older than he was, had been engaged some time, and I knew also her intended was in the navy, which quite accounted for her being always ready to listen to Harry's *yarns*. I did not know, however, until Captain Lee arrived, that he had been the commander of Harry's ship; and Harry's amazement that she should be engaged to such an old man (Captain Lee was five-and-thirty) amused us much at the time.

Perhaps these little details are too trivial to mention now, when the end has come; and yet why should his merry, loving life be hidden away and forgotten? I suppose no boy ever passed through "the waves of this troublesome world," as his mother used to say, with a purer heart, or a brighter, happier spirit. That line of our great poet, "God make thee good as thou art beautiful," was realised in him.

I am only giving a sketch, and it is all too recent to require description or words of mine ; all I need say is, Captain Lee got command of the *Fury*, was ordered to the Gold Coast, and that Harry asked to be appointed to her.

God help England when her sons are not ready to volunteer, and God help the mothers when they are ! God help the aching hearts that are weeping sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country !

"I may have a chance of the Victoria Cross, you know, mother, now," he said that last evening.

"Yes, my boy," she said, quietly, her white fingers lingering lovingly in the curls, from which she had just cut a long, thick lock. "Yes, my boy," but I saw her lip quiver, and the far-away look came into her eyes again, praying for the curly head in the day of battle—praying he might yet come again from the land of the enemy.

From Captain Lee, R.N., to Mrs. Woodhouse.

"DEAR MRS. WOODHOUSE,—I grieve much to write particulars of the death of young Grenville, the bravest lad that ever was, beloved by all, regretted by all. He asked me to write to you to break it to his mother, but I fear Mrs. Grenville will have learnt it by telegram before this reaches you, though I write by the first mail.

"He was not far from me, and by darting forward received the shot intended for myself. He was shot near the spine, and fell. I saw it was a mortal wound as soon as we raised him, but he was calm and quite conscious. 'Captain,' he said, 'tell Helen I saved you, she'll be so glad. And tell my dear mother'—there he stopped, and tears filled his eyes (and mine too, I may most truly say)—'dear mother,' he went on, 'we wanted the Victoria Cross, mother and I ; tell her I tried for it—and I've always said my prayers—and I'm glad I did—troublesome waves of this world—tell her, please sir—she knows what I mean—and I've no pain.'

"No, there was no pain. His young face, looking really 'as it had been the face of an angel,' so calm to the last—and the last came very soon—showed there was no pain. And just before the last—you know what a splendid voice he had—just before the last he suddenly sang two lines of a favourite hymn :—

> "'The night is dark, and I am far from home,
> Lead Thou me on.'

"It was the last effort ; the low, clear notes, and the touching words, 'I am far from home,' were quite overpowering to all who heard him.

"What can I say? what words can express my sorrow, my distress, that he should have given his young life for mine? How can I write to poor Mrs. Grenville? He thought for her and asked me to write to you. 'Break it gently to my mother,' he said. When I think of

her, I feel keenly that no words of mine can be any consolation—that nothing can be of any comfort to her except the thought, the sure and certain hope, that her brave boy tried to win a Cross—but has won a Crown instead.

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

"December 16, 1873." "ARTHUR LEE.

BRIDAL ROBES.

BY MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

A BRIDAL robe should be
A dress to be worn for the day ;
Then laid aside with all perfumes rare,
A treasure to guard with lifelong care,
A relic for ever and aye.

And never meaner use
Should sully its delicate snow :
The bride's last robe in her maidenhood
Should remain as perfect, pure, and good
As when it was donned I trow.

For ever a dainty type
Of her chastity pure and white ;
Folded up like a rose in the bud,
Perfection hidden, but understood
By all who could think aright.

Text from the marriage morn,
In its silence to speak thro' life,
Of duties, put on with every fold,
To change that life's silver into gold,
If love link true husband and wife.

And not 'till Death should call
The tried wife to his bridal bed,
Should that well-saved robe again be worn,
Or the orange-wreath again adorn,
The auburn or snow-white head.

And only wife who kept
As spotless her life as her dress,
Be honoured to wear her bridal gown,
Be honoured to wear her bridal crown,
When Death should her pale lips press.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

COMING HOME.

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW HOME.

A COLD, drizzly rain was falling. We get wintry weather sometimes in July; as was the case now. The lovely summer seemed to have come to an abrupt end, and to have flown away for good. At least, it appeared so to those who were turning out of their late happy and prosperous home, to enter on another of which they knew little. Knew nothing, in fact, except that it would have to be one of poverty and labour. For this was the day that Mrs. Raynor and her children were quitting Eagles' Nest.

All superfluous effects had been disposed of, even to their personal trinkets. Charles's watch, that he set store by because it had been his father's, and had only just come into his possession, had to go. Without the sale of these things they could not have paid all their debts and kept enough for pressing requirements. A fly took Mrs. Raynor, Alice, and the two young children to the station, Charles and Alfred having walked on; and a cart conveyed the trunks. The rain beat against the fly windows, the wind swept by in gusts, shaking the branches of the trees. Everything looked dreary and wretched, even Eagles' Nest. Oh, what a change it was, inwardly and outwardly, from that sunny day, bright with hope, when they had entered it only twelve little months before!

Charles was at the fly door when it drew up. "What class tickets am I to take?" he asked of his mother: and there ensued a blank pause. They were accustomed to go first class; but that would not do now.

"Either second, or—*third*, Charley," spoke poor Mrs. Raynor.

"There is no third class to this train," replied Charley, glad perhaps to have to say it, as he turned away to the ticket office.

And so they travelled up to London, Mrs. Raynor leaning back in the carriage with closed eyes, grateful for the rest. It had been a long scuffle to get away; and every one of them had mentally reproached Edina for not coming to their help.

"It is just as though she had deserted us," said Mrs. Raynor. "I suppose she will be at the new house to receive us, as she says; but I think she might have come: she knows how incapable I am."

The "new house," the address of which was furnished them by Edina in plain letters, was situated in the southern district of London, some three miles, or so, from the heart of the bustle. It was about five o'clock when they approached it in two cabs, through the dirt and drizzle. The spirits of all were depressed. With the very utmost difficulty Mrs. Raynor kept down her tears.

"I expect to find it a barn with nothing in it," she said, looking out on the dreary road. "Perhaps there will not be as much as a mattress to sleep on."

The cabs stopped before the door of a convenient, roomy, but old-fashioned looking house, standing a little back from the road, with a garden behind it. A rosy servant girl opened the door. She was not as fashionable looking as the maids they had left, but she was neat and active, and very willing—a remarkably desirable quality in a maid-of-all-work. Edina came forward; a bright and cheery smile of welcome on her face as she took all the hands into hers that she could get, and led the way to the sitting-room. It was quite well furnished, and the tea things stood on the table.

Instead of the empty barn Mrs. Raynor had expected, she found a house plainly but well stocked throughout with suitable furniture. The school-room, the airy bed-chambers, the sitting-rooms, the kitchen, all had their appropriate articles. Useful, plain furniture, quite new. Mrs. Raynor halted in the kitchen, which was not below ground, and gazed about her. The bright fire threw its warmth on the red bricks, a kettle was singing away, plates and dishes stood on the dresser shelves, other necessary articles were at hand.

"I cannot understand it, Edina. You must have obtained the things on credit, after all. Oh, that the school may succeed!—so that we may soon be enabled to pay for them."

"No credit has been asked or given, Mary," was Edina's answer. "The furniture has been bought and paid for, and it is yours."

"Bought by whom?"

"By me. You will not be too proud to accept it from your poor old friend Edina!"

Mrs. Raynor sat down on the nearest wooden chair, and burst into tears.

"You thought, I am sure, I might have come back to help you get away from Eagles' Nest, Mary, but I could not: I had too much to do here," explained Edina. "I find there is an opening in this neighbourhood for a school, and I also found this house, that is so suitable for one, to let. I took it, and with Frank's help furnished it, plainly as you see; and then I went about amid the neighbours, and put an advertisement or two in the papers, asking for pupils. Two boarders, sisters, will enter to-morrow; two more on Monday next, and five day pupils. This is not so bad a beginning, and I daresay others will drop in. I feel sure you will succeed; that you and Alice may get a very good school together in time: and I hope Heaven will bless and prosper you."

Mrs. Raynor was looking up from the wooden chair in her rather helpless manner. "I—I don't understand, Edina. Did you buy the furniture, or did Frank?"

"Not Frank, poor fellow: he has need of help himself. Be at ease, Mary: I bought it, and I have made it over to you by a deed of gift. The house is taken in your name, and I am responsible for the first half year's rent."

"Oh, Edina! But I thought you had no money—save the poor small income Dr. Raynor secured to you."

"Please don't you disparage my income," said Edina gaily. "It is fifty pounds a year: quite enough for me. As to the money, I had a hundred pounds or two by me that my dear father secured to me over and above the income. In laying it out for you and yours in this your need, Mary, I think it is well spent."

"And we used to call Edina mean and stingy!" thought Mrs. Raynor in her repentant heart. "At least, Charles and Alice did."

With the next week, all the expected pupils had entered; four boarders and five day pupils. Another day pupil, not expected, made six. It was a very good opening, affording hope of ultimate success.

"What do you think of it, Charley?" asked Mrs. Raynor on the third evening, as they sat together after the little boarders and Kate and Robert were in bed, Edina being out.

"Oh, I think it's first-rate," answered Charley, half seriously, half mockingly. "You and Alice will be making a fortune."

The remark did not please Alice. *She*, at least, was not reconciled to the new home and the duties.

"*You* may think it first-rate," she retorted on Charles. "It is widely different from Eagles' Nest. We were gentlepeople there; we are poor school-keepers here."

Charley made no remark. The very name of Eagles' Nest would give him a turn.

"And it is nothing but work all day," went on Alice. "Lessons this hour, music that, writing next. Oh, it is wearisome"!

"But don't grumble, my dears," interposed Mrs. Raynor. "It might have been so much worse. After the strange turn our affairs took, we might now be without a roof's shelter over our heads and a morsel of bread to eat. So far as I can see, we should have been, but for Edina."

The tears were raining down Mrs. Raynor's cheeks. Alice started up and threw her arms round her in repentance. "Forgive me, dear mamma, forgive me! I was wrong to speak so repiningly."

"You were wrong, dear Alice. In dwelling so much upon the advantages we have lost, you overlook the mercies remaining to us. And they are mercies. We are together under one home; we have the prospect of making a good living."

"Yes," acquiesced Charley, throwing regrets behind him. "It is a very nice home indeed, compared with what might have been."

"And I think we may yet be happy in it," added Mrs. Raynor.

Alice strove to think so too, and put on a cheerful face. But the old days were ever present to her; and she never recalled the old hopes, connected with William Stane, but her heart turned sick and faint in its hopeless despair.

"It will be your turn next, Charles," observed Edina, taking the opportunity of speaking to him the following morning when they were alone.

"My turn?" repeated Charles, vaguely; fully sure that he knew what she meant, but not choosing to know it.

"To do something for yourself," added Edina. "You cannot intend to live upon your mother."

"Of course I do not, Edina. How stupid you are!"

"And the question is, what is that something to be?" she continued, passing over his compliment to herself.

"I should like to go into the army, Edina."

Edina shook her head. Her longer experience of life, her habits of forethought, enabled her to see obstacles that younger people did not.

"Even if you had the money to purchase a commission, Charley——"

"But I did not think of purchasing. I should like to get one given to me."

"Is there a chance of it?"

Charles did not reply. He was standing before the window, gazing abstractedly at a young butcher boy, dashing about in a light cart for his morning orders. There was not very much chance of it, he feared, but there might be a little.

"Let us suppose that you had the commission, Charley, that it arrived here for you this very day direct from the Horse Guards—or whatever the place may be that issues them," pursued Edina. "Would it benefit you?"

"Benefit me!"

"I mean, could you take it up? How would you find your necessary outfit?—regimentals cost a great deal. But that would not be the chief consideration, for you will say perhaps that you might obtain them on credit and pay as you could. I have heard that it takes every officer more than his pay to live. I have often thought that were I an officer it should not take me more; but it may be that I am mistaken. You would not have anything besides, Charley."

"Oh, I expect I should get along."

"Take it at the best, you would have nothing to spare. I had thought that you might choose something which would enable you to help them here at home."

"Of course. It is what I should wish to do."

"Alfred must be educated; and little Robert too as he comes on. Your mother may not be able to do this. And I do not see that you will have it in your power to aid her if you enter the army."

Charles began scoring the window pane with a pencil that he held, knowing not what to answer. In truth, his own intentions and views as to the future were so vague and purposeless, that to dwell on it gave him the nightmare.

"What should you propose, Edina?"

"A situation," replied Edina promptly. "In some good city house."

But for the obligations they were just now under to Edina, Mr. Charles Raynor would have scoffed at her for the suggestion. It suited neither him nor his pride. A situation in some city house! That meant a clerk, he supposed. To write at desks and go on errands!

"I wish you'd not talk so, Edina," he peevishly said, wishing he might box her ears. "Did you ever hear of a Raynor becoming a tradesman's jack-of-all-trades?"

"Did you ever hear of a Raynor with no means of living?" retorted Edina. "No profession, and no money? Circumstances alter cases, Charley."

"Circumstances can't make a common man a gentleman; and they can't make a gentleman take up the rôle of a common man."

"Can't they! I think they often do. However, Charley, I will say no more just now, for I perceive you are not in the humour for it. Consider the matter with yourself. *Don't* depend upon the commission, for indeed I do not see that you have a chance of one; put it out of your thoughts, and look to other ways and means. I shall be leaving you in a day or two, you know, and by that time you will perhaps have decided on something."

Edina went into the school-room, and Charles stood where he was. Alfred came in with his Latin books. Mrs. Raynor was going to send Alfred to a day-school close by; but it did not open for another week or two, and meanwhile Charles made a show of keeping him to his Latin.

"What am I to do this morning, Charley?"

"Copy that last exercise over again, lad. It was so badly written yesterday I could not read it."

Alfred's pen went scratching over the copy-book. Charles remained at the window, deep in thought. He had no more wish to be living on his mother than any other good son has; but he did not see where he could go, or what he could do. The doubt had lain on his mind during these recent days more than was agreeable for its peace. His whole heart was set upon a commission; but in truth he did not feel much more sanguine of obtaining one than Edina seemed to feel.

He wished he was something—wished it there as he stood. *Anything* rather than be in this same helpless position. Wished he was a doctor, like Frank; or a banker, like that wretch, George Atkinson; or a barrister, like that other wretch, Stane. Had he been brought up to one of these callings he should at least have a profession before him. As it was, he felt incapable: he was fit for nothing; knew nothing. If he could get a commission given to him, he should be on his legs at once; and *that* required no special training.

But for Charles Raynor's inexperience he might have found that a candidate for a commission in the army does require a special training now. In his father's young days the case was otherwise. The Major had been very fond of talking of those days; Charles had thence gathered his impressions, and they remained with him.

Yes, he said to himself, making a final score on the window pane, he must get the commission; and the sooner the better. Not to lose time, he thought it might be well to see about it at once. An old acquaintance of his father's, one Colonel Cockburn, had (as Charles was wont to put it to himself) some interest in high quarters; his brother, Sir James Cockburn, being one of the Lords of the Admiralty. Of course, reasoned Charles, Sir James must be quite able to give away posts indiscriminately in the army as well as the navy; and it was not likely he would refuse one to his brother, if the latter asked for it. So if he, Charles, could but get Colonel Cockburn to ask, the affair was done.

"Are you going out?" questioned Alfred, as Charles began to brush his coat and hat.

"Yes, I am going to see Colonel Cockburn," was the reply. "No good putting it off longer. When you have finished copying that exercise, youngster, you can do another. And mind you stick at it: don't go worrying the mother."

Away went Charles, on the top of the first passing omnibus. Colonel Cockburn's club was the Army and Navy. Charles possessed no other address of his; and to that building he found his way, and boldly entered.

"Colonel Cockburn, sir?" was the answer to his inquiry. "I don't think he is in town."

"Not in town!" cried Charles, his ardour suddenly damped. "Why do you think that?"

"He has not been here for a day or two, sir: so we conclude he is either absent, or ill. The Colonel is sometimes laid up with gout for a week together."

"Can you tell me where he lives? I'll go and see."

"In St. James's Street," replied the man, giving at the same time the number.

To St. James's Street proceeded Charles, found the house, in which the Colonel occupied rooms, and saw the landlady. Colonel Cockburn was at Bath: had gone to stay with a brother who was lying there ill.

"What a dreadful bother!" thought Charles. "Cockburn must have a whole regiment of brothers!" And he stood in indecision.

"Will the Colonel be back soon?" inquired he.

"I don't at all know," was the landlady's answer. "Should he be detained in Bath, he may not come back before October. The Colonel always leaves London the end of July. Sometimes he leaves earlier than that."

"What on earth am I to do?" cried Charles, partly aloud, his vivid hopes melting considerably. "My business with him was urgent."

"Could you write to him?" suggested the landlady.

"I suppose I must—if you have his address. But I ought to see him."

She took an envelope from the mantelpiece, on which was written an address in the Crescent, Bath. Charles copied it down, and went out. He stood a moment, considering what he should do. The day was so fine and the town so full of life, that to go hence to that poking old southern suburb seemed a sin and a shame. So he decided to make a day of it, now he was there, and began with the Royal Academy.

Time slips away in the most wonderful manner when sight-seeing, and the day was over before Charles thought it half way through. When he reached home, it was past nine. The children were in bed; his mother also had gone there with headache; Edina and Alice were sewing by lamp-light. Alice was at some fancy work; Edina was mending a torn pinafore: one of a batch.

While taking his supper, Charles told them of his ill-luck in regard to Colonel Cockburn. And when the tray went away, he got paper and ink and began to write to him.

"He is sure to have heard of our misfortunes—don't you think so, Edina? I suppose I need only just allude to them."

"Of course he has heard of them," broke in Alice, resentfully. "All the world must have heard of them."

Charley went on writing. The first letter did not please him; and when it was nearly completed he tore it up and began another.

"It is always difficult to know what to say in this kind of application: and I don't think I am much of a letter-writer," observed he, candidly.

Alice grew tired, nodded over her embroidery, and at length said good night and went upstairs. Edina sent the servant up, and stitched on at another pinafore.

"I think that will do," said Charley: and he read the letter aloud.

"It will do very well," acquiesced Edina. "But, Charley, I foresee all kinds of difficulties. To begin with, I am not at all sure that you are eligible for a commission: I fancy you ought to go first of all to Woolwich."

"Not a bit of it," replied Charley, full of confidence. "What other difficulties do you foresee, Edina?"

"I wish you would give up the idea."

"I daresay! What would you have me do, if I did give it up?"

"Pocket pride, and get a situation."

Charles tossed back his head. Pride was nearly as much in the ascendant with him as it ever had been. He thought how old and silly Edina was getting. But he remembered what she had done for them, and would not quarrel with her.

"Time enough to talk of that, Edina, when I have had Colonel Cockburn's answer."

Edina spoke no further for a few moments. She rose; shook out Robert's completed pinafore, and folded it. "I had a scheme in my head, Charley; but you don't seem inclined to hear anything I may say upon the subject."

"Yes, I will," replied Charley, lifting his ears at the rather attractive word "scheme." "I will hear that."

"I cannot help thinking that if Mr. George Atkinson were applied to, he would give you a post in his bank. He ought to do it. After turning you out of Eagles' Nest——"

"I'd not apply to him; I'd not take it," interrupted Charles fiercely, his anger aroused by the name. "If he offered me the best post in it to-morrow, I would fling it back in his face. Good night, Edina: I'm off. I don't care to stay to hear of suggested obligations from *him*."

On the day of Edina's departure for Trennach, the morning post brought Colonel Cockburn's answer to Charles. It was very short. Edina, her bonnet on, stood to read it over his shoulder. The Colonel intimated that he did not quite comprehend Charles's application; but would see him on his return to London.

"So there's nothing for it but to wait—and I hope he won't be long," remarked Charles, as he folded the scantily worded letter. "You must see there's not, Edina."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. MAX BROWN.

In a very populous and rather obscure part of Lambeth, not a hundred miles away from the great hospital, Bedlam, there ran a narrow street. Not so narrow as to be inconvenient, for carts and carriages could pass each other; but narrow in comparison with the finer streets of this vast metropolis. In the midst of the shops, on the left hand side of this street, going from London, stood a house that could not strictly be called a shop now; though it had been one but recently, and the two counters inside it still remained, the street door opening between them in the middle. It had formerly been a small chemist's shop. About a year ago, a young medical man of the name of Brown had taken it, done away with the drugs and chemicals, so far as retailing them to the public went, and set himself up in it as a doctor. He dispensed his own medicines, so the counters were useful still, and his glass jars of powders and liquids occupied the pigeon-holes above, where the chemist's jars had stood. The lower half of the two windows had been stained white; on one of them was written in black letters, "Mr. Max Brown, surgeon;" on the other, "Mr. Max Brown, general medical practitioner."

It was now about a year since Mr. Max Brown had thus established himself; and he had done very fairly. If his practice did not afford the promise that he would speedily become a millionaire, it at least was sufficient to keep him. And to keep him well. Mr. Brown had himself been born and reared in as crowded a part of London as this, somewhere towards Clerkenwell, therefore the locality did not offend his tastes; he looked to remain in it for good, and he had not the slightest doubt that his practice would steadily increase, and afford him a carriage and a better house in time. The tradespeople around, though far below those of Regent Street in the social scale, were tradespeople of sufficient substance, and could afford to pay Mr. Brown. He was a little dark man, of affable nature and manners, clever in his profession, liked by his patients, and winning his way more surely amid them day by day.

In the midst of this humble prosperity a check occurred. Not to the prosperity, but to Mr. Brown's plans and projects. Several years before, his elder brother had gone to the West Indies, and his mother (a widow) and his sister had subsequently followed him out. The sister had married there. The brother, whose name was Kenneth, was for some years manager of a planter's estate, and now managed one of his own. Altogether they were extremely prosperous; and the only one of the family left in England, Max, received pleasant letters from them by each fortnightly mail, and was entirely at ease with regard to them.

It therefore took him completely by surprise, in the midst of this ease, to find himself suddenly summoned to Jamaica.

One day in this same hot summer, early in the month of June—for we must go back a week or two in our story—Mr. Brown, having completed his morning round of calls on patients, stood behind his counter making up the physic required by them, and waiting for his queer old maid-servant, Eve, to come and tell him his one o'clock dinner was ready. The door stood open to the hot street and to the foot passengers, traversing the pavement; and Sam, the young boy, was waiting near the opposite counter with his covered basket, until the physic should be ready.

"That's all to-day, Sam," said his master pleasantly, as he folded the white paper round the last bottle, and motioned to the lad to bring the basket forward. "And, look here"—showing one of the packets—"this is for a fresh place. Number 26, you see, in the Walk. It's a grocer's shop."

"All right, sir. I shall find it."

"Maximilian Brown, Esq.," interrupted a voice at this juncture. It was that of the postman. He came in at the open door, and read out the address of the letter (his usual custom) as he put it down.

"Oh, the mail's in, I see," observed the doctor to him.

"Yes, sir."

The postman and the boy went out together. Mr. Brown, leisurely turning down his coat cuffs, which were never allowed to come in contact with the physic, took up the West Indian letter, and broke the seal. By that seal, as well as by the writing, he knew it was from his mother. Mrs. Brown always sealed her letters.

The letter contained but a few shaky lines. It told her son Max that she was ill; ill, as she feared, unto death. And it enjoined him to come out to Jamaica, that she might see him before she died. A note from his brother was enclosed, which contained these words.

"Do come out, dear Max, if you can in any way manage it. Mother's heart is set upon it. There is no immediate danger, but she is breaking fast. Come by next mail if you can, the middle of June; but at any rate don't delay it longer than the beginning of July. I enclose you an order on our London bankers, that the want of funds may be no impediment. Your affectionate brother, Kenneth."

It took a great deal to disturb the equable temperament of Max Brown. This did disturb him. He stood staring at the different missives: now at his mother's, now at his brother's, now at the good round sum named in the order. A thunderbolt could not have more effectually taken him aback. Eve, a clean old lady in a flowery chintz gown, with a mob cap and bow of green ribbon surmounting her grey hair, came in twice to say the loin of lamb waited: but she received no notice in return.

"I *can't* go," Max was repeating to himself. "I don't see how I *can* go. What would become of my practice?"

But his mother was his mother: and Max Brown, a dutiful son, began to feel that he should not like her to die until he had seen her once again. She was not sixty yet. The whole of the rest of the day and part of the night he was revolving matters in his mind; and in the morning he sent an advertisement to the *Times* and to a medical journal.

For more than a week the advertisement brought back no result. Answers there were to it, and subsequent interviews with those who wrote them; but none that were of any avail to Max Brown. Either the applicants did not suit him, or his offer did not suit them. He then inserted the advertisement a second time.

And it chanced to fall under the notice of Frank Raynor. Or, strictly speaking, under the notice of his friend Crisp. This was close upon the return of Frank from Eagles' Nest. Daisy was with her sister in Westbourne Terrace, and Frank had been taken in by Mr. Crisp, a young surgeon who held an appointment at one of the London hospitals. He occupied private rooms, and could accommodate Frank with a sofa-bedstead. Mr. Crisp saw the advertisement on the morning of its second appearance in the *Times*, and pointed it out to Frank.

"*Notice.* A qualified medical practitioner wanted, to take entire charge for a few months of a general practice in London during the absence of the principal."

"It may be worth looking after, old fellow," said Crisp.

Frank seized upon the suggestion eagerly. Most anxious was he to be relieved from his present state of helpless inactivity. An interview took place between him and Max Brown; and before it terminated Frank had accepted the post.

To him it looked all couleur de rose. During the very few days he had now been in London, that enemy, the Tiger, had troubled his mind more than was pleasant. That the man had come up in the same train, and absolutely in the compartment immediately behind his own, for the purpose of holding him in view, and of tracking out his place of abode in town, appeared to be only too evident. When Frank had deposited his wife at her sister's door, the turnings and twistings he caused the cab to make in carrying him to Crisp's, would have been enough to baffle a detective. Frank hoped it had baffled the Tiger; but he had scarcely liked to show himself abroad since. Therefore the obscurity of the locality in which Mr. Brown's practice lay, while it had frightened away one or two dandies who had inquired about it, was a strong recommendation in the eyes of Frank.

The terms proposed by Mr. Brown were these: That Frank Raynor should enter the house as he went out of it, take his place in all respects, carry on the practice for him until he himself returned, and

live upon the proceeds. If the returns amounted to more than a certain sum, the surplus was to be put by for Mr. Brown.

Frank agreed to all: the terms were first-rate; just what he should have chosen, he said. And surely to him they looked so. He was suddenly lifted out of his state of penniless dependence, had a house put over his head, and occupation. The very fact of possessing a home to bring Daisy to would have lent enchantment to the view in his sanguine nature.

"And by good luck I shall dodge the Tiger," he assured himself. "He will never think of looking for me *here*. Were he to find me out, Mr. Blase Pellet would be down upon me for hush-money—for that I expect will be his move the moment he thinks I have any money in my pocket at all. Yes, better for me to be in this obscure place at present, than flourishing before the west-end world as a royal physician." So, when preliminaries were arranged, he wrote to Mrs. Raynor, saying what a jolly thing he had dropped into.

But Mr. Max Brown reconsidered one item in the arrangement. Instead of Frank's coming in when he left, he had him there a week beforehand that he might introduce him to the patients. Frank was to take to the old servant and to the boy: in short, nothing was to be altered, nothing changed, save the master. Frank was to walk in and Mr. Brown to walk out; all else was to go on as before. Mr. Brown made no sort of objection to Frank's wife sharing the home: on the contrary, he made one or two extra arrangements for her comfort. When he sailed, the beginning of July, Frank was fully installed Daisy might come then as soon as she pleased: but her sister wished to keep her a little longer.

On one of the hot mornings in that same month, July, a well-dressed young fellow in deep mourning might be seen picking his way amid the narrow streets of Lambeth, rendered ankle-deep in mud by the prodigal benevolence of the water-cart. It was Charles Raynor. Having nothing to do with his time, he had come forth to find out Frank.

"It *can't* be here!" cried Charley to himself, sniffing about fastidiously. "Frank would never take a practice in a low place like this! I say—here, youngster," he cried, arresting the steps of a tattered girl, who was turning out of a shop, "do you chance to know where Mark Street is?"

"First turning you comes to," promptly responded the damsel, with assured confidence.

Charles found the turning and the street, and went down it, looking on all sides for the house he wanted. As he did not remember, or else did not know, the name of Frank's predecessor, the words "Mr. Max Brown" on some window panes on the opposite side the way afforded him no guide; and he might have gone on into endless wilds but for catching sight inside of a shapely head and some bright hair,

which he knew belonged to Frank. He crossed the street at a bound, and entered.

"Frank!"

Standing in the identical spot that Max Brown was standing when we first saw him, was Frank, his head bent forward over an account-book, in which he was writing. He looked up hastily.

"Charley!"

Their hands met, and some mutual inquiries ensued. They had not seen each other since quitting Eagles' Nest.

"We thought you must be dead and buried, Frank. You might have come to see us."

"Just what I have been thinking—that you might have come to see me," returned Frank. "*I* can't always get away. Since Brown left, and for a week before it, I have not had a minute to myself: morning, noon, and night, I am tied to my post here. Your time is your own, Charley."

"I have been about at the West-end, finding out Colonel Cockburn, and doing one thing or another," said Charley, by way of excuse for his laziness. "Edina left us only yesterday."

"For Trennach?"

"Yes, for Trennach. We fancy she means to take up her abode for good in the old place. She does not feel at home anywhere else, she says, as she does there. It was good of her, though, was it not, Frank, to set us up in the new home?"

"Very good—even for Edina. And I believe few people in this world are so practically good as she is. I did a little towards helping her choose the furniture; not much, because I arranged with Brown. How is the school progressing?"

"All right. It is a dreadful come-down: but it has to be put up with. Alice cries every night."

"And about yourself? Have you formed any plans?"

"I am waiting till Cockburn returns to town. I expect he will get me a commission."

"A commission!" exclaimed Frank dubiously; certain doubts and difficulties crossing his mind, as they had crossed Edina's.

"It will be the best thing for me if I can only obtain it. There is no other opening."

Frank remained silent. His doubts were very strong indeed; but he never liked to inflict thorns where he could not scatter flowers, and he would not damp Charley's evident ardour. Time might do that quickly enough.

Charley was looking about him. He had been looking about him ever since he entered, somewhat after the fastidious manner that he had looked at the streets, but more furtively. Appearances were surprising him. The small shop (it seemed no better) with the door

standing open to the narrow street; the two counters running up on either side; the glass jars aloft; the scales lying to hand, and sundry packets of pills and powders beside them: to him, it all savoured of a small retail chemist's business. Charley thought he must be in a kind of dream. He could not understand how or why Frank had descended to so inferior a position as this.

"Do you *like* this place, Frank?"

"Uncommonly," answered Frank; and his honest blue eyes, glancing steadily into Charley's, confirmed the words. "It is a relief to be in harness again; and to have a home to bring Daisy to."

"Will Daisy like it?" questioned Charles. And the hesitation in his tone, which he could not suppress, plainly betrayed his opinion, that she would not.

Frank's countenance fell. It was the one item of rue in the otherwise sufficiently palatable cup.

"I *wish* I could have done better for her. It is only for a time, you know, Charley."

"I see," said Charley, feeling relieved. "You are only here while looking out for something better."

"That's it, in one sense. I stay here until Brown comes back. By that time I hope to—to pick myself up again."

The slight halt was caused by a consciousness that he did not feel assured upon the point. That Mr. Blase Pellet and his emissary, the Tiger, and all their unfriendly machinations combined, would by that time be in some way satisfactorily disposed of, leaving himself a free agent again, Frank devoutly hoped and most sanguinely expected. It was only when his mind dipped into details and he began to consider how and by what means these enemies were likely to be subdued, that he felt dubious and doubtful.

"Something good may turn up for you, Frank, before the fellow—Brown, if that's his name—comes home. I suppose you'll take it if it does."

"Not I. My bargain with Brown is to stay here until he returns. And here I shall stay."

"Oh, well—of course a bargain's a bargain. How long does he expect to be away?"

"He did not know. He might stay four or six months with his people, he thought, if things went on well here."

"I say, why do you keep that street door open?"

"I don't know," answered Frank. "From habit, I suppose. Brown used to keep it open, and I have done the same. I like it so. It imparts some liveliness to the place."

"People may take the place for a shop, and come in."

"Some have done so," laughed Frank. "It was a chemist's shop before Brown took to it. I tell them it is only a surgery now."

"When do you expect Daisy?" asked Charles, after a pause.

"This evening."

"This evening!"

"I shall snatch a moment at dusk to fetch her," added Frank. "Mrs. Townley is going into Cornwall on a visit to the Mount, and Daisy comes home."

"Have the people at the Mount forgiven Daisy yet?"

"No. They will not do that, I expect, until I shall be established as a first-rate practitioner, with servants and carriages about me. Mrs. St. Clare likes show."

"She'd not like this, I'm afraid," spoke Charles candidly, looking up at the low ceiling and across at the walls.

Frank was saved a reply. Sam, the boy, who had been out on an errand, entered, and he began delivering a message to his master.

"Would you like some dinner, Charley?" asked Frank. "Come along. I don't know what there is to-day."

Passing through a side door behind him, Frank stepped into a contiguous sitting-room. It was narrow but comfortable. The window looked to the street. The fireplace was at the opposite end, side by side with the door that led to the house beyond. A mahogany sofa covered with horsehair stood against the wall on one side; a low bookcase and a work-table on the other. The chairs matched the sofa; on the centre table the dinner cloth was laid; a red-and-green carpet and hearthrug completed the furniture.

"Not a bad room, this," said Charley, thinking it an improvement on the shop.

"There's a better sitting-room upstairs," observed Frank. "Well furnished too. Brown liked to have decent things about him; and his people, he said, helped him liberally when he set up here. That work-table he bought the other day for Daisy's benefit."

"He must be rather a good sort of a fellow."

"He's a very good one.—What have you for dinner, Eve? Put a knife and fork for this gentleman."

"Roast beef, sir," replied the old woman, who was bringing in the dishes, and nodded graciously to Charles, as much as to say he was welcome. "I thought the new mistress might like to find a cut of cold meat in the house."

"Quite right," said Frank. "Sit down, Charley."

Charley sat down, and did ample justice to the dinner. Especially to the Yorkshire pudding. A dish of which he was particularly fond, and had not lost his relish for amid the dainties of the table at Eagles' Nest. He began to think Frank's quarters were not so bad on the whole, compared with no quarters at all and no dinner to eat in them.

"Have you chanced to see that man, Charley, since you came to

London?" inquired Frank, putting the question with a certain reluctance, for he hated to allude to the subject.

"What man?" returned Charley.

"The Tiger."

"No, I have not seen him. I learnt at Oxford that I had been mistaken in thinking he was looking after me——"

"He was not looking after you," interrupted Frank.

"My creditors there all assured me—Oh Frank, how could I forget?" broke off Charley. "What an ungrateful fellow I am! Though, indeed, not really ungrateful, but it had temporarily slipped my memory. How good it was of you to settle those two bills for me! I would not write to thank you: I preferred to wait until we met. How did you raise the money?"

Frank, whose dinner was finished, had nothing to do but stare at Charles. And he did it. "I don't know what you are talking of, Charley. What bills have I settled for you?"

"The two wretched bills I had accepted and went about in fear of. You know. Was it not you who paid them?"

"Are they paid?"

"Yes. All paid and done with. It must have been you, Frank. There's nobody else that it could have been."

"My good lad, I assure you I know nothing whatever about it. Where should I get a hundred pounds from? What could induce you to think it was I?"

Charles told the tale—all he knew of it. They wasted some minutes in conjectures, and then came to the conclusion that it must have been Major Raynor who had paid. That he had become acquainted in some way with Charles's trouble and had taken the means to relieve it. A lame conclusion, as both felt. For, setting aside the fact that the poor Major was short of money himself, to pay bills for his son stealthily was eminently uncharacteristic of him: he would have been far more likely to let the whole house know of it, and reproach Charley in its hearing. But they were fain to rest in the belief, from sheer lack of any other benefactor to fix upon. Not a soul was there, in the wide world, so far as Charley knew, to come forth in this manner, save his father.

"And what of Eagles' Nest?" asked Frank, as he passed back into the surgery with Charles, and sent the boy into the kitchen to his dinner. "Has George Atkinson taken possession yet?"

"We have heard nothing of Eagles' Nest, Frank; we don't care to hear. Possession? Of course he has. You may depend upon it he would make an indecent rush into it the very day after we came out of it, the wretch! If he did not the same night."

Frank could not help a smile at the burst of indignation. "Atkinson ought to do something for you, Charley," he said. "After turning you

out of one home, the least he could do would be to get you another. I daresay he might put you into some post or other."

"And do you suppose I'd take it!" fired Charles, his eyes ablaze "What queer ideas you must possess, Frank! You are as bad as Edina. As if——"

"Oh if you please, Dr. Brown, would you come to mother," interrupted a small child, darting in at the open door. "She have fell through the back parlour window while cleaning of it, and her arm be broke, she says."

"Who is your mother, little one?"

"At the corner shop, please sir. Number eleven."

"Tell her I will come directly."

Charles was taking up his hat, to leave. "Why does she call you Dr. Brown?" he questioned, as the child ran off, and Frank was making ready to follow her and summoning Sam to mind the surgery.

"Half the people here call me so. It comes more ready to them than the new name. Good-bye, Charley. My love to them all. Come again soon."

He sped away in the wake of the child. Charley turned the other way on his road homewards, carrying with him a very disparaging opinion of Lambeth.

In the small back sitting-room, underneath its two lighted gas-burners, stood Mrs. Frank Raynor, her heart beating faster than usual, her breath seeming to choke her. She felt partly frightened, partly dazed by what she saw—by the aspect of the place she was brought to, as her new home. Frank had in a degree prepared her for it while they came along in the cab which brought them, Daisy's boxes piled on the top of it: but either he had done it insufficiently, or else she had failed to realize his description of what he called the "humble den," for the sight of it came upon her with a shock. Both as Margaret St. Clare and as Margaret Raynor, her personal experiences of dwelling-places had been sunny ones.

The clock was striking ten when the cab drew up in Mark Street. She looked out to see why it stopped. She saw the narrow street, the inferior locality, the small shops on either side. The one before which they had halted appeared to be a shop too: the door stood open, a gas-burner was alight inside.

"Why are we stopping here, Frank?"

Frank, hastening to jump out, did not hear the question. He turned to help her.

"This is not the place, is it?" she cried in doubt.

"Yes, this is it, Daisy."

He took her inside, piloted her between the two counters into the

lighted side room, and turned back to see to the luggage; leaving her utterly aghast, bewildered, and standing as still as a statue.

The door at the end of the room opened and a curious old figure, attired in a chintz gown of antique shape, with a huge bow of green ribbon on her round cap, appeared at it. Eve curtsied to her new mistress: the new mistress stared at the servant.

"You are welcome to your home, ma'am. We are glad to see you. And, please, would you like the supper tray brought in?"

"Is—is this Mr. Raynor's?" questioned Daisy, in a tone that seemed to say she dreaded the answer.

"Sure enough it is, ma'am, for the present. He is here during the master's absence."

Daisy said no more. She only stood still in her grievous astonishment, striving to comprehend it all, and to hush her dismayed heart. The luggage was being brought indoors with sundry bumps, and Eve went to help with it. Frank found his wife seated on the horsehair sofa, when he came in; and he caught the blank look on her pale face.

"You are tired, Daisy. You would like to take your things off. Come upstairs, and I will show you your bed-room."

Lighting a candle, he led the way, Daisy following him mechanically up the steep and confined staircase, to which she herself seemed to present a contrast, with her supremely fashionable attire: costly black gauze, relieved by frillings of soft white net.

"The room's not very large, Daisy," he said, entering one on the first floor, the window looking out on some back leads. "There's a larger one in front on the upper landing, but I thought you would prefer this, and it is better furnished. It was Brown's room. He said I had better take to it, for if I went up higher I might not hear the night bell."

"Yes," replied Daisy faintly, untying the strings of her bonnet. "Was it a—a shop we came through?"

"That was the surgery. It used to be a shop, and Brown never took the trouble to alter its appearance."

"Have you always to come through it on entering the house?"

"Yes. There is no other entrance. The houses in these crowded places are confined for space, you see, Daisy. I will help Sam to bring up the boxes," added Frank, disappearing.

When finally left to herself, Margaret sat down and burst into a passionate flood of tears. It seemed to her that, in coming to dwell in this place, she must lose caste for ever. Frank called to her presently, to know whether she was not coming down.

Drying her eyes as she best could, she took the candle in her hand to descend. On the opposite side of the small landing, a door stood open to a sitting-room, and she looked in. A fair-sized room this, for it was over both the surgery and the parlour, and a very nice room

too, its Brussels carpet of a rich purple hue, its chairs and window hangings to match, its furniture good and handsome. She put the candle on a console, crossed to one of the windows, and gazed down at the street.

Late though it was, people were surging to and fro; not at all the kind of people Daisy had been accustomed to. Over the way was a small fish shop; a ragged man and boy, standing before it, were eating periwinkles. To pass one's days in such a street as this must be frightfully depressing, and Mrs. Raynor burst into tears again.

"Why, my darling, what is the matter?"

Frank, coming up in search of her, had found her sobbing wildly, her head buried on the arm of one of the purple chairs. She lifted it, and let it lodge upon his breast.

"You are disappointed, Daisy. I see it."

"It—it is such a poor street, Frank; and—and such a house!"

Frank flushed red. He felt the complaint to his heart's core.

"It is only for a time, Daisy. Until I can get into something better. If that may ever be!" he added to himself, as Blase Pellet's image rose before his mind.

Daisy sobbed more softly. He was holding her to him.

"I know, my poor girl, it is very inferior; altogether different from anything you have been accustomed to; but this home is better than none at all. We can at least be together and happy here."

"Yes, we can," replied Daisy, rallying her spirits and her sweet nature, as she lifted her face to look in his. "I married you for worse, as well as for better, Frank, my best love. We *will* be happy in it."

"As happy as a king and queen in a fairy-tale," rejoined Frank, a whole world of unmitigated hope in his tone.

And that was Daisy's instalment in her London home.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NIGHT ALARM.

Misfortunes seldom come alone. Many of us, unhappily, have had, times and again, only too good cause to learn the truth of the saying; but few, it is to be hoped, have experienced it in an equaldegree with the Raynors. For another calamity was in store for them: one that was at least, taking the difference between their present and past circumstances into consideration, as distressing as the ejection from Eagles' Nest.

But it did not happen quite immediately. The weeks were calmly passing, and Mrs. Raynor felt in spirits; for two more day-scholars had entered at the half-quarter, and another boarder was promised for Michaelmas. So that matters might be said to be progressing satisfactorily, though monotonously.

Monotony, however, does not suit young people, especially if they have been suddenly plunged into it. It did not suit Charles and Alice Raynor. Contrasting ever, as they were, the present state of enforced quiet and obscurity with the past life at Eagles' Nest, its show, its society, its expensive luxuries, no wonder that they felt well-nigh weary unto death. At first it was almost unbearable. But they could not help themselves: *it had to be endured.* Charles was worse off than Alice; she had her school duties to occupy her in the day: he had nothing. Colonel Cockburn had not yet returned to London, and Charles told himself and his mother that he must wait for him. As the weeks went on, some relief suggested itself from this irksome dreariness—perhaps was the result of it.

The alleviation was found in private theatricals. They had made the acquaintance of some neighbours, named Earle; had become intimate with them. The circumstances of the two families were much alike, and perhaps this at first drew them together. Captain Earle—a post captain in the Royal Navy—had left but a slender income for his wife at his death: just enough to enable her to live in a quiet manner, and to bring up her children inexpensively. They were gentlepeople; and that fact went a long way with the Raynors. The young Earles—four of them—were all in their teens; the eldest son had a post in Somerset House, the younger one went to a day-school in the neighbourhood, the two daughters had finished their education, and were at home. It chanced that these young people had a passion just now for private theatricals, and the Raynors caught the infection. After a performance at Mrs. Earle's of a popular comedy, Charles and Alice Raynor got up from it wild to perform one at their own home.

And probably the very eagerness, with which they entered upon and pursued it, arose out of the recent monotony of their lives. Mrs. Raynor looked grave: she did not know whether the parents of her pupils would approve of private theatricals. But her children over-ruled her objection, and she could but yield to them. She always did.

They fixed upon Goldsmith's comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." A thoroughly good play in itself. Charles procured some sixpenny copies of it, and drew his pen through any part that he considered unsuitable to present taste, which shortened the play much. He chose the part of Charles Marlowe; Alice that of Miss Hardcastle; Mrs. Earle, who liked the amusement as much as her children did, would be Mrs. Hardcastle; her eldest daugher Constance Neville; and the young Somerset House man Tony Lumpkin. The other characters were taken by some acquaintances of the Earles.

And now, fairly launched upon this new project, the monotony of the house disappeared: for the time, they even forgot to lament after Eagles' Nest. Dresses, gauzes, tinsel, green baize curtains, and all the rest of it, were to be lent by the Earles; so that no cost was involved.

The school-room was to be the play-house, and the pupils were to have seats amid the audience.

Charles entered into it with wonderful energy. He never now had a minute for lying on three chairs, or for stretching his hands above his head to help a mournful yawn. A letter that arrived from Edina, requiring him to transact a little matter of business, was wholly neglected; it would have involved his going to the City, and he said he had no time for it.

Edina had intended to insure the new furniture in the same Cornish office that her father had insured his in for so many years. Perhaps she had more faith in it than in the London offices. However, after some negotiation with the Cornish company upon her return to Trennach, they declined the offer, as the furniture it related to was so far away, and recommended to her a safe and good insurance company in the City of London. She wrote to Mrs. Raynor, desiring that Charles should at once go to the City to do what was necessary and secure the policy. Charles put it off upon the plea that he was too busy; it could wait.

"Charley, I think you ought to do it, if only to comply with Edina's wish," urged Mrs. Raynor.

"And so I will, mother, as soon as I get a little time."

"It would only take you half a day, my dear."

"But I can't spare the half day. Do you think the house is going to be burnt down?"

"Nonsense, Charley!"

"Then where's the need of hurry?" he persisted. "I have looked after everybody else's part so much, and the arrangements altogether, that I scarcely know a word yet of my own. I stuck yesterday at the very first sentence Charles Marlowe has to say."

Mrs. Raynor, never able to contend against a stronger will, gave in as usual, saying no more. And Charles was left unmolested.

But in the midst of this arduous labour, for other people as well as for himself, Charles received news from Colonel Cockburn. The Colonel wrote to say he was in London for a couple of days, and Charles might call in St. James's Street the following morning.

This mandate Charles would not put off, in spite of the exigencies of the theatricals; and of the first rehearsal, two evenings hence. The grand performance was to take place during the few days' holiday Mrs. Raynor gave at Michaelmas; and Michaelmas would be upon them in little more than a week.

Charles went to St. James's Street. And there his hopes, in regard to the future, received a very decided check. Colonel Cockburn—who turned out to be a feeble and deaf old gentleman—informed Charles that he could not help him to obtain a commission, and moreover, explained many things to him, and assured him that he had no chance of

obtaining one. Nobody, the Colonel said, could get one now unless he had been specially prepared for it. He would advise Charles, he added, to embrace a civil profession; say the law. It was very easy to go to the Bar, he believed; involving only, so far as he knew, a certain number of eaten dinners. All this sounded very cruel to Charles Raynor. Otherwise the Colonel was kind. He kept him for the day, and took him to dine at his club.

It was late when Charles got home; thoroughly tired. Disappointment, of itself, inflicts weariness. Mrs. Raynor felt terribly disheartened at the news.

"There have been so many weeks lost, you see, Charley!"

"Yes," returned Charles, gloomily. "I'm sure I don't know what to be at now. Cockburn suggested the Bar. He says one may qualify for almost nothing."

"We will talk of it to-morrow, Charley," said Mrs. Raynor. "It is past bed-time, and I am tired. You were not thinking of sitting up later, were you, my dear?" she added, as Charles took up "She Stoops to Conquer" from a side table.

"Oh well—I suppose not, if you say it is so late," he replied.

"The dresses have come, ready for the rehearsal, Charley," whispered Alice, as they were going upstairs. "I have put them in your room. Charlotte Earle and I have been trying on ours. I mean to wear one of Edina's brown holland aprons while I am supposed to be a barmaid."

"I'll be shot if I know half my part," grumbled Charley. "It was a bother, having to go out to-day!"

"You can learn it before Michaelmas."

"Of course I can. But one likes to be perfect at rehearsal. Good night."

Charles turned into his room, and shut the door. It was a good-sized apartment, one that Mrs. Raynor destined for boarders later, when the school should have increased. The first thing he saw, piled up between the bed and the wall, partly on a low chest of drawers, partly on the floor, was a confused heap of gay clothes and other articles: the theatrical paraphernalia that had been brought round from Mrs. Earle's. Topmost of all, lay a yellow gauze dress edged with tinsel. Charles, all his interest in the coming rehearsal reviving at the sight, touched it gingerly here and there, and wondered whether it might be the state robe for one of the younger ladies, or for Tony Lumpkin's mother.

"I wish to goodness I was more perfect in my part!" cried he, pulling corners out of the other things to see what their bulk consisted of. "Suppose I give half-an-hour to it, before I get into bed." Alfred lay on the far side, fast asleep.

The little book was still in his hand. He edged the candle on the

corner of the drawers amid the finery, and sat down near, facing the side of the bed and pausing in the act of taking off his coat. A night or two ago, for this was by no means the first time he had sat down in his chamber to con the sayings of young Marlowe, he took his coat off, dropped asleep, and woke up with the cold in his arms when the night was half over. So he kept the coat on now.

Precisely the same event took place: Charles fell asleep. Tired with his day's journey, he had not studied the book five minutes when it fell from his hands. He was in a sound slumber. How long he remained in it he never knew, but he was awakened by a shout and a cry. Fire!

A shout and a cry, and a great glare of light. Fire? Yes, it was fire. Whether Charles had thrown out his arm in his sleep and turned the candle over, or whether a spark from it had shot out spontaneously, he knew not, never would know; but the pile of finery, lying there, had caught light. The flames had penetrated to the bed, and awakened Alfred. It was Alfred who shouted the alarm. Perhaps Charles owed his life to the fact that he had kept his coat on: its sleeve was scorched.

These scenes have been often described before: it is of no use to detail them here. A household aroused in the depth of the night; terrified women and children shrieking and running; flames mounting, smoke suffocating. They all escaped with life, taking refuge at the dwelling of a neighbour; but the house and its contents were burnt to the ground.

"My dear Edina,—I never began a letter like this in all my life; it will have nothing in it but ill-news and misery. Whether I am doing wrong in writing to you, I hardly know. My mother would not write. She feels a delicacy in disclosing our calamities to you, after your generous kindness in providing us with a home; and she must be ashamed to tell you of me. The home is lost, Edina, and I am the cause.

"I am too wretched to go into details; and, if I did, you might not have patience to read them; so I will tell the story in as few words as I can. We—I, Alice, and the Earles: you may remember them as living in the low, square house, near the church—were going to act a play, 'She Stoops to Conquer.' I sat up last Wednesday night to study my part, dropped asleep, and somehow the candle set light to some stage dresses that were lying ready in my chamber. When I woke up, the room was in flames. None of us are hurt; but the house is burnt; and everything that was in it.

"That is not all. I hate to make this next confession to you worse than I hated the last. The insurance on the furniture had not been effected. I had put it off and off, though my mother urged me more than once to go and do it.

"You have spoken sometimes, Edina, of the necessity of acting so that we may enjoy a peaceful conscience. If you only knew what

mine is now, and the torment I endure, even you might feel a passing shade of pity for me. There are moments when the weight seems more than I can bear.

"We have taken a small, cheap lodging near; No. 5, in the next side street; and what the future is to be I cannot tell. It of course falls to my lot now to keep them, as it is through me they have lost their home, and *I shall try and do it.* Life will be no play-day with me now.

"I thought it my duty to tell you this, Edina. While holding back from the task, I have yet said to myself that you would reproach me if I did not. And you will not mistake the motive, since you are aware that I know you parted with every shilling you had, to provide us with the last home.

"Write a few words of consolation to my mother; no one can do it as you can: and *don't spare me to her.*

"Your unhappy cousin,

"CHARLES."

Frank Raynor once made the remark in our hearing that somehow everybody turned to Edina when in trouble. Charley had instinctively done it. Not because it might lie in his duty to let her know what had come to pass, to confess his own share in it, his imprudent folly; but for the sake of his mother. Though Edina had no more money to give away, and could not help them to another home, he knew that if anyone could breathe a word of comfort to her, it was Edina.

One thing lay more heavily upon his conscience than all the rest; and if he had not mentioned this to Edina, it was not that he wished to spare himself, for he was in the mood to confess everything that could tell against him, almost with exaggeration, but that in the hurry of writing he had omitted it. On one of the previous nights that he had been studying his part, Mrs. Raynor caught sight of the light under his door. Opening it, she found him sitting on the bed in his shirt sleeves, reading. There and then she spoke of the danger, and begged him never to sit up at night again. The fact was this: Charles Raynor had nothing on earth to do with his time; an idle young fellow, as he was, needed not the night for work; but his habits had grown so desultory that he could settle to nothing in the day-time.

The answer from Edina did not come. Charles said nothing of having written to her; but he did fully hope and expect Edina would write to his mother. Morning after morning he posted himself outside the door to watch for the postman; and morning after morning the man passed and gave him nothing.

"Edina is too angry to write," concluded Charles at last. "This has been too much for even her." And he betook himself to his walk to London.

No repentance could be more thoroughly sincere than was Charles

Raynor's. The last dire calamity had taken all his pride and his high notions out of him. The family were helpless, hopeless; and he had rendered them so. No clothes, no food, no prospects, no home, no money. A few articles of wearing apparel had been flung out of the burning house, chiefly pertaining to Alice, but not many. All the money Mrs. Raynor had in the world—four bank-notes of five pounds each—had been consumed. There had chanced to be a little gold in Charles's pockets, given him to pay the insurance, some taxes, and other needful matters; and that was all they had to go on with. Night after night Charles lay awake, lamenting his folly, and making huge resolves to remedy it.

They must have food to eat, though it were but bread and cheese; they must have a roof over them, let it be ever so confined. And there was only himself to provide this. Any thought of setting up a school again could not present itself to their minds after the late ignominious failure: they had no means to do it, and the little pupils had gone home for ever. No; all lay on Charles. He studied the columns of the *Times*, and walked up and down London till he was footsore; footsore and heartsick; trying to get one of the desirable places advertised as vacant. In vain.

He had been doing this now for four or five days. On this, the sixth day, when he reached home after his weary walk, the landlady of the house stood at the open door, bargaining for one of the pots of musk that a man was carrying about for sale. Charles wished her good evening as he passed on to the parlour: and there he had a surprise, for in it sat Edina. She had evidently just arrived. Her travelling cloak was thrown on the back of a chair, her black mantle was unpinned, her bonnet was still on. Katie and Robert sat at her feet; the tea-things were on the table, Alice was cutting bread and butter, and Mrs. Raynor was sobbing. Charles held out his hand with hesitation, feeling that it was not worthy for Edina to touch, and a red flush dyed his face.

After tea, the conversation turned on their present position, on plans and projects. Ah! what poor ones they were! Mrs. Raynor acknowledged freely that she had only a few shillings left.

"Have you been paid for the pupils?" asked Edina.

"No," replied Mrs. Raynor. "I have not yet sent in the accounts. The children were not with me quite a quarter, you know, and perhaps some of the parents may make that a plea, combined with the termination, for not paying me at all. Even if I do get it, there are debts to pay out of it: the tradespeople, the stationer, the maid-servant's wages. Not much will be left of it."

"Then, Mary, let us settle to-night what is to be done."

"What can be settled?" returned Mrs. Raynor hopelessly. "I see nothing at all before us. Except starvation."

"Don't talk of starvation, Mary, while Heaven spares us the use of

our minds to plan, and our hands to work," said Edina, pleasantly; and the bright tone cheered Mrs. Raynor. "For one thing, I have come up to live with you."

"Edina!"

"I cannot provide you with another home: you know why," continued Edina: "but I can share with you all I have left—my income. It is so poor a one that perhaps you will hardly thank me for it, saddled with myself; but at least it is something to fall back upon, and we can all share and share together."

Mrs. Raynor burst into tears again. Never strong in resources, the repeated calamities she had been subjected to of late had tended to render her next door to helpless both in body and spirit. Charles turned round to Edina, brushing his eyelashes.

"I cannot presume to thank you, Edina: you would not care to receive thanks from me. *I* am hoping to support them."

"In what manner, Charles?" asked Edina; and her tone was as kind as usual. "I hear you have lost hopes of the commission."

"By getting into some situation and earning a weekly salary at it," spoke Charles bravely. "The worst is, situations seem to be so unattainable."

"How do you know they are unattainable?"

"I have done nothing the last few days but try after one. Besides the advertised places, I can't tell you how many banks and other establishments I have made bold to go into, asking if they want a clerk. A hundred a year would be something."

"It would be a great deal," replied Edina significantly. "Salaries to that amount are hard to find. I question if you would get the half of it at first."

A blank look overspread Charley's face. Edina's judgment had always been good.

"But why do you question it, Edina?"

"Because you are inexperienced: totally unused to work."

"Yes, that's what some of them said when they questioned me."

"There is one person who might help you to such a situation if he would," observed Edina slowly. "But I shall offend you if I speak of him, Charles: as I did once before."

"You mean George Atkinson?"

"I do. If he chose to put you into his bank, he might give you any salary he pleased; and his will might be good to do it, whether you earned it or not. I think he would if I asked him."

There was a pause. Edina's thoughts were carrying her back to the old days when George Atkinson had been all the world to her. It would cost her something to apply to him: but for the sake of this helpless family, she must bring her mind to do it.

"What do you say, Charles?"

"I say yes, Edina. I have nothing but humble-pie to swallow just now: it will be only another slice out of it. Banking work seems to consist of adding up columns of figures perpetually: I should get expert at it no doubt, in time."

"Then I will go to-morrow and see whether he is in town," decided Edina. "If not, I must travel down to Eagles' Nest."

"You might write instead," suggested Mrs. Raynor.

"No, Mary, I will not write. So much more can be said at a personal interview."

The next morning saw Edina at the banking-house of Atkinson and Street: the very house where she had spent those few blissful days of her early life when she had learned to love. Mr. Street and his wife lived in it now. She went to the private door, and asked for him. He had known her in those days; and a smile actually crossed his calm cold face as he shook hands with her: and to her he proved more communicative than he generally showed himself to the world.

"Is Mr. Atkinson in town?" she inquired, when a few courtesies had passed.

"No. He——"

"I feared not," quickly spoke Edina, for she had quite anticipated the answer. "I thought he would be at Eagles' Nest."

"But he is not at Eagles' Nest," interposed the banker. "He is on the high seas, on his way to New Zealand."

"On his way to New Zealand!" echoed Edina, hardly thinking, in her surprise, that she heard correctly.

"He went away again immediately. I do not suppose he was in London a fortnight altogether."

"Then he could not have made much stay at Eagles' Nest?"

"He did not make any stay at it," replied Edwin Street. "I don't think he went down to Eagles' Nest at all. If he did go, he came back the same day, for he never slept one night away from this house throughout his sojourn."

"But what could be the reason?" reiterated Edina wonderingly. "Why has he gone away so soon again?"

"He put it upon the score of his health, Miss Raynor. England does not agree with him."

"And who is living at Eagles' Nest?"

"A Mr. Fairfax. He is a thoroughly efficient land agent, or steward, and has been appointed to the charge of the estate. His orders are to take care of it, and to renovate it by all possible means that money and labour can do. Mr. Atkinson was informed on good authority that it had been neglected by Major Raynor."

"That's true," thought Edina. "I am very much surprised that Mr. Atkinson did not go down to see into it for himself!" she said aloud.

"Long residence in foreign lands often conduces to foster indolent habits," remarked the banker.

Edina sighed. Was her mission to be a fruitless one? Taking a moment's counsel with herself, she resolved to disclose its purport to Edwin Street. And she did so: asking him to give Charles Raynor a stool in his counting-house, and a salary with it.

But Mr. Street declined. His very manner seemed to freeze at the request. A young man, brought up as Mr. Charles Raynor had been could not possibly be of any use in a bank, he observed.

"Suppose Mr. Atkinson were here, and had complied with my request to put him in?—what then?" said Edina.

"In that case he would have come in," was the candid answer. "But Mr. Atkinson is not here; in his absence I exercise my own discretion; and I am bound to tell you that I cannot make room for the young man. Don't seek to put Charles Raynor in a bank: he is not fitted for the post in any way, and might do harm in it instead of good. Take an experienced man's advice for once, Miss Raynor."

"It has spared me the pain of the interview with *him*," thought Edina, as she said good morning to Mr. Street. "But what a strange thing that he should go away without seeing Eagles' Nest!"

(*To be continued.*)

HIDDEN TREASURES.

Where blooms the flower which doth not fade?
Where is the star which e'er doth shine?
Tell me, oh muse! in what fair glade
To seek that flower and star divine!

I cannot teach thee where to find
These treasures, if thou canst not tell—
The star and flower are in the mind,
Thrice happy they who guard them well

HOW IT HAPPENED.

By Narissa Rosavo, Author of "Polly."

REDCHESTER was, in old days, a fashionable sea-side town. It is now chiefly peopled by persons concerned in the fishing trade, which prospers here: by the male and female scholars and teachers and scholars of two large educational establishments called respectively the College and the Academy: and by some ever-varying detachment of troops. The place is too large for these inhabitants, and only looks as lively as it ought on market-days, when visitors crowd in from the surrounding country districts. We might have many permanent summer guests here, if only there were any railway stations near at hand, but there are not; and so the grand old squares of houses in the upper part of the town are mouldering away, and falling into ruins. We have to travel ten miles by coach, cab, or waggon, as the case may be, to reach the junction, in order to proceed thence to the city of Weston or elsewhere; and this is the nearest spot from which we can commence a journey by train.

Redchester is divided into districts. All the upper part is appropriately termed "Look-out," as it commands an extensive view of the ocean and harbour, which is continually gay with home and foreign boats and small vessels. Up above here there is a pretty tree-enclosed square, where the shopkeepers promenade on certain evenings in summer and listen to the band playing; and where the young people sometimes amuse themselves at croquet. The assembly-rooms and billiard-hall overlook this. The barracks are near at hand; and then, a little further on, stands our very old-fashioned and somewhat clumsy-looking church, which is rich in strange monuments and weird legends.

Look-out also boasts of a large monastery within its precincts. This is inhabited by some foreign order of monks, who go about bare-headed, and wear long grey gowns, gathered in at the waist by coarse ropes.

Down below, Redchester is intersected by a wide river, emptying itself into the ocean. Two bridges cross this, and one of these is dilapidated and shadowed over by tall trees. The districts they connect are termed Old and New Town: and in both an odour of fish, in every stage of preservation and decay, is universally prevalent.

The Academy, before mentioned, is in the latter division. It is, in part, a charitable institution, and there are consequently strict rules laid down concerning the attire of the pupils. Girls of all ages, from ten to thirty, can receive an excellent education here, fitting them

for private life or for holding situations as governesses, when they can secure a nomination for the school, for the moderate cost of about thirty pounds a year; but they must dress almost as simply as quakers, and are allowed no licence in the matter of doing up the hair peculiarly or becomingly. Curls or waves must be brushed out, however hard the task may be, and no pads are permitted to be worn.

The College is situated in Old Town. My husband, John Grey, is one of the head masters, and we live in a large and very antiquated-looking house, which adjoins the main building; twelve of the scholars always residing with us. Our hall-door opens out upon the narrow, winding street, and is approached by a broad, high flight of stone steps. Every part of our mansion is constructed on an immense scale, as though, when it was built, Redchester had been inhabited by a race of giants. The rooms are lofty, the walls thick, and the doors enormous. A long arched and flagged passage, or corridor, connects our dwelling with the school to which we are attached.

We have had one great friend here ever since our arrival: Louis Carter, a man of somewhat multifarious employments. He had been, at one time, very well off. There was every prospect of his having large means in his hands, and of his holding a good position in society, but his father speculated heavily, and lost nearly all he possessed. His last act, shortly before his death, had been the purchase of an annuity for his son and only child, with the remains of his fortune. "He did this because he believed me quite incapable of earning anything for myself," Louis explained to me, one of those soft, dreamy, half-sad smiles peculiar to him lighting up his face as he spoke.

Our friend was just over thirty when we knew him first. He had devoted his youth and early manhood to the study and culture of music, which was his great and absorbing pleasure; but when comparative poverty fell upon him he turned his attention to other things. At the time I now write of, although he was organist at our church, and also gave music lessons two evenings in each week at the Academy, he was, besides, employed every morning as a clerk in a thriving local bank.

Thus he was a busy and tolerably well-to-do man, but he was quite alone in the world, and was of a depressed and desponding turn of mind. He had, moreover, a great dislike to Redchester. Its ruined houses and its somewhat desolate, world-forsaken air oppressed him with gloom and melancholy forebodings, he was wont to say. I always, on the contrary, cherished a particular partiality for the place. It seemed to me as if life in this picturesque spot could not be as commonplace and unromantic as it might be elsewhere.

I gave lessons twice a week at the Academy as well as Louis Carter, but the accomplishment I taught was drawing. When I arrived at the school one blustering day early in January, I found that

two new pupils were to be added to my class. These were Fenella and Frances Perrin, the daughters of a medical man who had died suddenly, and had left so little provision for his family that these, his eldest children, had come to Redchester with the intention of qualifying themselves to act as governesses. The last-mentioned girl was the elder of the two, but almost everyone instinctively put the names in the order I have used above; for Frances had an air of almost childish simplicity about her, which made her appear to be far younger than her sister. Fenella was also a whole head the taller of the pair, and carried herself with an indescribably coquettish confidence of manner.

I thought that Frances was singularly unsuited to the profession she intended to adopt. A beautiful, refined, and sensitive face, a lovely voice, and a shy and timid manner are not the best qualifications with which a young governess can face the world. And all these she possessed.

A great many of the girls had not returned yet from their homes, whither they had gone to spend the Christmas holidays, on the morning when I first made acquaintance with my new pupils. Nevertheless, the long room, in which the drawing and music lessons were given to the more advanced scholars, was tenanted by a small crowd of young people when I entered it. There was a large bow-window at each end, and a great fire-place nearly opposite the door. Round this some twenty or thirty girls were standing, sitting, and kneeling; all busily engaged laughing, whispering, or listening.

Frances and Fenella Perrin were a little apart from the rest, looking as uncomfortable as they no doubt felt upon this their first day in a strange place. The former had her small white hands clasped nervously together. She stood with her slender, graceful figure drawn up to its fullest height. Her beautiful, tender face was pale, and her wide-open blue eyes had in them a look of pathetic and wistful abstraction. Her sunny, light brown hair shone and glistened even on this dull day. She made a lovely picture.

Fenella was leaning over the back of a tall chair, in a very ungraceful attitude. She was evidently in a great state of indignation at something which had occurred. She sulked and pouted, and her brows were angrily contracted, while her eyes bore traces of recent tears. She sat next to me as I gave my lesson, and by degrees she brightened up into a good humour. She displayed decided talent, and improved every instant in personal appearance, as her face began more and more to glow with cheerful animation, until I was inclined to consider her almost as uncommon-looking and attractive as her sister, though in a very different way. Frances was busily drawing at the opposite side of the table, and her small, glossy head offered so striking a contrast, and so pretty a point of view, that my eyes strayed thither again and again.

My class was broken up, and lights were brought in, just as Louis Carter entered the room to give his afternoon lessons. It struck me that his face wore an unusually grave and forlorn look that evening, but he smiled a greeting when he recognised me. I was a little curious to see what impression the new pupils would make upon him. They were neither of them girls to be passed over unnoticed in any assemblage.

I naturally concluded that none of the three had ever met before, and I was therefore much surprised to hear Fenella whisper to her sister, "It is he! It is the same Mr. Carter, and he is my very particular friend. What do you think of him?"

Frances had a habit of pausing before she spoke, as if she were anxious not to say anything without due consideration. She was just beginning to reply when the governess, who had appeared with our professor, called the two up to introduce them to the notice of the master. As she did so I noticed that she put the younger girl's name first, as I have done in writing, and as I always felt inclined to do when addressing them both together by word of mouth. In after days I often wished that we had not all fallen into this habit.

It was explained that Frances did not play much. Hitherto she had never attempted more than the performance of her own accompaniments. I drew a little nearer to observe whether Louis was also an old acquaintance of hers. It appeared not, but he was evidently far from remaining unimpressed by her beauty. His cheek flushed when his dreamy eyes fell upon the lovely downcast face before him, and I thought he lingered over the delivery of his opinion as he told her gently that he considered she made a great mistake, if she had a fine voice, in not straining every nerve to become a good player as well as an excellent singer. "So much depends on the way that a song is accompanied," he said.

Fenella had been waiting impatiently. She now held out her hand. "You and I have met before, Mr. Carter," she exclaimed, with a saucy and coquettish air. The other pupils opened their eyes with surprise at her audacity. It was not etiquette in the school for the girls to speak to the masters, except when they had some question to ask about their studies.

"Stand aside, Miss Perrin, if you please," the governess said, in freezing tones, while she motioned to another young lady to come forward and take her place at the piano.

I was now ready to return home, but it was raining heavily, and the German mistress persuaded me to wait awhile in the hope that the weather might improve. This was her holiday hour, and she carried me off upstairs to her room, to share her leisure for a time. She had a pleasant little sanctum here, all to herself. The chamber was cosy, cheerful, and warm, for a bright fire was burning in the grate. A large

cat sat on the rug, purring and blinking. A vase filled with sweet-scented violets and Christmas roses was upon the table, and an open piano stood against the wall. It would have been impossible for us to make use of this instrument just now, however, even had we wished to do so, as the music from below came to us in full distinctness. We sat down and listened. There was presently a change of performers. Some one began to play with a good deal of brilliancy, but in every few bars a note was dropped or played incorrectly.

"I feel sure it is Fenella Perrin who is at the piano," I said.

My companion ran off to find out whether my surmise had been correct, and came back laughing, and informing me I was right.

"What a face, perfectly lovely, has the little girl with the bright hair," she observed, enthusiastically, as she sat down again.

Of course I assented to this. "I like both the girls," I said. "They must come to me on Saturday next."

At this moment a clear, full, melodious voice began to sing that pathetic "Parting Song," by Gilbert.

"It is Frances. It is early yet to talk of separation, when she has only just come to us," I said, when the last soft notes had died away. She was one of those singers who can constrain attention, and make the hearers forget the world, and all its cares, as they listen.

By the time the rain had ceased it was quite dark, and I was very glad to find that Louis Carter was then ready and willing to escort me home. We chose the shortest way from the Academy to the College, although this led us over the old bridge, which my companion told me he nearly always avoided crossing. He kept me lingering there on this occasion, however.

"I never saw any beauty in this dreary place before," he said. "I have generally an instinctive, unaccountable dislike to the spot; and yet, to-night, it has a sort of fascination for me. Perhaps I shall learn to admire Redchester scenery in the end, Mrs. Gray, as you do."

The moon had just risen, and was casting a white ghostly light around. Candles gleamed in cottage windows here and there, and lamps burned and flared in many of the boats. A great tree near us cast gloomy shadows from its leafless branches, and shook and groaned beneath the wintry blast. The water below rushed swirling through the arches of the bridge, and washed angrily against the sides of some old decaying vessels, drawn up on the bank, at a little distance off, to await the destructive work of time, for seafaring superstition forbade their use as firewood.

We were nearing home, at last, when my companion suddenly asked me if I would do him a favour.

"Certainly, if it is in my power," I answered, wondering at his eager and yet hesitating manner. "What do you wish?"

"Will you get the Miss Perrins to attend our choir practice?"

"If I can. The pretty one could help much with her voice. Is she not beautiful?"

"I never saw anyone half so lovely before," he replied, and I thought the arm upon which my hand rested trembled as he spoke.

"And Fenella," I inquired, "do you like her? She and you seemed to be old friends."

"I used to meet her, sometimes, when I was living at Weston," he said, absently. "She is gay and merry; but when she plays she has no soul."

We had reached the College then, and he was turning away.

"Has Frances no soul in her voice?" I asked.

I thought he had not heard my question; but after a short pause a very energetic reply came wafted to me through the gloom made by the overshadowing houses:

"Plenty of soul, but much need of study."

II.

It had become a settled thing that the Perrin girls were to spend every Saturday afternoon with me. We had all three taken to each other, and I did not quite know whether I liked Frances or Fenella most. The latter I soon discovered to be an arrant coquette and flirt. She was, moreover, intolerably vain. Both the girls had already many admirers in Redchester. Much to my surprise, Fenella was more thought of and talked about than Frances. Whenever the former escaped from the Academy she was always on the qui vive, looking out for a meeting with any male being, were it even but a juvenile collegian, with whom she could get up a little flirtation. It was quite a trial to her, I am sure, that there was seldom a youth to be seen with us when she arrived; for as Saturday was a half holiday at the College as well as at the Academy, all the scholars generally dined very early, and set out at once after dinner upon some country expedition.

I took the two girls to the choir practice at six every Saturday evening, and thence accompanied them back to the school. The organist had made it his custom to escort us from the church on this latter walk. I saw very plainly that he was fast losing his heart to one of my young friends, but, I confess, I found it impossible to decide positively as to which of them was proving the attraction; and I believe that I was not the only person who considered over this question.

Fenella always spoke of Louis by the title of her "particular friend;" and she was continually quoting speeches to us, from his lips, which certainly, as she delivered them, appeared to have been said with a tender meaning. But then we both knew she was apt to see things as she wished them to be, rather than as they were exactly. Nevertheless,

it was a matter of fact that our musical professor talked more to her than I had ever known him do to anyone else.

Frances and he rarely conversed together, and in his absence she never mentioned him; but if he were suddenly spoken of before her, I noticed that she blushed and grew confused. She was always rather inclined to silence, but on our Saturday evening walks she now rarely uttered a word. Her face wore a meditative air at such times, and her gentle, wistful eyes were sometimes turned with a puzzled and questioning expression upon Louis and her sister, when Fenella, according to her wont, was trying to rouse her companion into a humour for exchanging lively badinage with her. As we all grew more and more intimate, she was often successful in these attempts, for our friend was no longer the gloomy and moody man he had been. My husband and I rejoiced over the change in him. He carried himself now with a more erect carriage, and walked with a firmer, more elastic tread than before; and at this time he breathed into his voluntaries a sort of triumphal tone, very different from the pathetic sadness they had formerly expressed.

"He has given us one of Batiste's Andantes as if it were a wedding march, or a Christmas carol," I said to Frances, after service one Sunday, while we exchanged greetings in the church porch. She practised instrumental music diligently in those days; and once, when Mr. Carter rewarded some modest performance of hers with an emphatic "Well done," I saw such a tender, happy smile brighten her fair face!

It was two o'clock on Saturday when the girls arrived at the College. The boys, as usual, had all dispersed, and we turned into the drawing-room, before going upstairs, to discuss the respective merits of two photographs Frances had just had done, and which she had brought me to choose from. One showed her full-face,—the other gave a profile view of the lovely, refined features. Both were so pretty that I found it difficult to make a selection between them. I put them back, at last, into their envelope, which I laid upon the table, and proposed that I should defer my decision until later.

We were all very merry that day, and we walked up the wide, old-fashioned oak staircase three abreast, laughing and talking as we went, and having our arms linked together.

We all three grew deep in discussion over a book we were reading, and this made us linger upstairs even longer than we need have done. Thus it was twenty minutes, or perhaps even half an hour, before we descended. Our surprise was therefore great at finding the drawing-room tenanted by Louis Carter.

He stood up as we went in, looking, I thought, strangely flushed and confused. Louis told us that he had got a holiday from bank work on this occasion, as he had not been quite well all the morning. He had

called to offer us tickets for a concert to be held that evening in the town hall. When he arrived the maid had showed him in here, saying we should be down immediately.

We were much pleased at the idea of the evening's entertainment, but I said we must walk back to the Academy and ask permission to enjoy ourselves before we definitely arranged to go. Fenella was in exuberant spirits. She danced about the room with delight, laying down a programme of our proceedings as she went. "High tea at four," she said; "then a journey to the school, to ask leave of Mother Crooke. After that the choir practice; and, to crown all, a concert. Were ever school-girls so fortunate as we?" She paused in her tour of ecstasy before the round table, and began heaping the books one upon another.

The day was a very busy one—so busy that I never, during its course, recollected the photographs I was to choose between. The girls were equally forgetful, for our minds were engrossed with other matters up to the moment of parting. I did not go in search of the photographs until the following evening. To my surprise and indignation, I found that there was no longer a choice left to me. The profile likeness alone remained in the envelope which had contained the two.

I could only, at the moment, conclude that some of the boys had been rummaging in the place, and that they had been unable to resist the temptation of securing so great a prize. If this was the case, however, I wondered that both photographs had not been taken. I called my husband into the room and consulted with him. His suspicions went in the same direction as mine, and yet we neither of us liked to ask questions or to make inquiries upon the subject, lest there might possibly be some mistake.

I was much provoked at the loss, and still more vexed with myself for carelessly leaving the photographs tossing about. I began to turn over the books, in the vain hope that one of the likenesses had fallen between them, when a sudden thought flashed across my mind.

"I have it!" I exclaimed joyfully. My husband was sitting by the fire.

"I felt sure it would turn up," he said, in a relieved tone.

"Oh, I have not found the likeness!" I cried. "I have only hit upon an idea. I feel certain now that Louis Carter took the photograph while he was here alone in the room. I am delighted, too, to know this. It clears up all my perplexity. It shows me that Frances is the one he cares for. I must tell her about the loss, and make her understand who has been the thief."

"You will do nothing of the kind, I hope," my husband said. "Your conjectures may be correct, but they may also be wrong. I think the only right course is to keep silence for the present, and in the meantime to go off and order a new copy from the photographer."

This was what I eventually did, and I was very soon extremely thankful that I had followed this advice.

The next Saturday happened to be St. Valentine's day. The girls came to me, as usual; but Frances was coughing, and seemed ill. She was perfectly pale, and her eyes looked larger than usual, and there were dark lines drawn underneath her lower lids. She laughed and talked, however, with forced and feverish gaiety quite unnatural to her. Both maidens were laden with valentines, and Fenella was merry with a right good will, although I saw her occasionally stealing a pitying glance at her sister.

I recognised the handwriting upon many of the envelopes shown to me. The Redchester Collegians had been particularly amorously inclined this year. The younger girl had received no less than seventeen triumphs of art, while Frances displayed twelve tokens of admiration.

"Is that all?" I asked, at last, when I had my lap full of Cupids, doves, and roses.

"There is one more," Fenella said gleefully, and yet with a certain hesitation of manner; "but it is of quite a different sort from these. It is a *real* one. Don't you think so, Frances?"

The poor child had been bending over the fire. She shivered as she attempted to smile when thus addressed. I saw her blue eyes fill with tears, as she answered, in a husky voice:

"I don't know—Yes—I suppose it is." Her liveliness had failed her all of a sudden, and I wondered what could be the matter.

Fenella, meanwhile, had drawn her last treasure forth, and now held it before me. This valentine consisted of a large unornamented sheet of white paper, containing a bold sketch of the sea-shore and of the great heaving ocean. Underneath was written:

> "So vast my love!
> My bliss as boundless,
> If thou wilt be mine.—L. C."

The envelope was directed to Miss F. Perrin, and there had been no attempt made to disguise the handwriting. The sender was certainly our organist, and he wished that fact to be known. I pushed all the gaudy missives aside in disgust, and sat silent for a while. Fenella was quite keen enough to see what was in my mind, but she passed no remark. Frances was so engrossed in trying to appear indifferent that she observed nothing. I got up and brought her the likeness I had just received from the photographer, saying aloud that I had determined to keep the profile likeness; while all the time I was mentally repeating, over and over again, "He did not take it, then, and I have been deceived."

As Francis had a cold, I proposed that we should not go to the

choir practice that evening. Fenella remonstrated against this idea with eager indignation, and the elder girl yielded at once, and consented to go, as if the matter were quite indifferent to her, although she had confessed to feeling weary and unequal to further effort.

Fenella vexed and provoked me all that day. And yet I was unreasonable, no doubt, in expecting her to act otherwise than as she did, considering the circumstances of the case, and her nature. She feigned extreme fatigue when we left the church, until she almost obliged Mr. Carter to offer her his arm. He only went with us half way to the Academy, however. He turned away then, pleading urgent business as an excuse for leaving us; and after that how Fenella did chatter!

"He asked me if there could be any hope for him," she said, breaking out into a conscious little laugh; "and I said, 'Of course not;' and, would you believe it, the stupid old fellow trembled all over as the words came out! He is a goose. Instead of shivering and going away like that he ought to have settled the whole matter to-night, upon the spot."

Frances and I were walking arm in arm. She too trembled just now, and I, half inadvertently, caught her hand in mine, but she drew quite away from me as I did so.

"You talk too much of things, Fenella," she said, with a little gasp.

"What is the good of things except to talk of them?" was the very characteristic answer given to this remark.

Fenella came to me by herself next Saturday. Frances had been laid up ever since that evening with a feverish cold. We did not go to the choir practice. Even had I been inclined to take Fenella by herself, she would not have cared much to go, as Louis Carter was absent on bank business, and had deputed his duties to an assistant. I went back with her in the evening to the school, to see Frances. She was up and downstairs again, but she still looked ill. Her face was white and pinched, her hands burned painfully. When I touched her lips they, too, felt unnaturally hot, but she called herself nearly well.

"I shall be quite ready to go to you and to the choir practice next week," she whispered. "Fenella tells me I mope, and that this attracts notice, but indeed I don't wish to do so. I would not interfere with her happiness for the whole world."

III.

The boys were unusually tardy about dispersing on the following Saturday. The weather was mild, dull, and spring-like, and they were intending to go off upon some fishing excursion. Their preparations for this were very elaborate and noisy. I grew weary, at last,

of hearing them tramping backwards and forwards through the long passage connecting our house with the College, and of listening to loud-voiced discussions about rods, bait, and tackle. I opened the great hall-door, and went out upon the steps to get a little peace.

The air was delightfully soft and balmy, but the prospect before me was far from enlivening. A cart laden with dried fish splashed through the muddy street. Two officers, attired in unbecoming undress, went by, with cigars in their mouths, obliging a market-woman to get off the path to allow them to pass. They had just turned out of sight when one of the bare-headed grey monks appeared, walking with down-cast eyes and a quick, silent step. A group of persons came into view almost immediately afterwards. They were Frances, with Louis Carter, followed by Fenella, who had the curate of the parish as her companion. All four looked out of sorts and uncomfortable. I felt instinctively that something disagreeable must have occurred, and I waited anxiously to greet the girls. The two gentlemen turned away in opposite directions when they reached the house, raising their hats to us all.

Fenella was at my side in an instant. Her eyes were blazing with angry excitement, and she threw back her head with a haughty, indignant toss and air. Frances stumbled up the steps, and burst into hysterical sobs as she got close to me. "Oh, hush!" I said, leading her into my husband's study, that being the only room downstairs in which we could be free from the boys' intrusion.

"How I hate such meanness!" Fenella cried, looking at her sister with an unutterably wrathful gaze. "If you had a lover, I would not try and entice him away from you, although it might indeed be fair enough for me to make the attempt, when you are so much prettier than I."

It was some little time before I could ascertain the meaning of all this, but at last I gathered that the facts of the case ran as follows:—

On leaving the Academy the girls had gone for a little walk before turning towards the College. They had met the curate, and Fenella, only too delighted to secure any male companion, had challenged him to escort them to their destination, which he was quite ready to do. Shortly afterwards, however, they fell in also with Louis Carter, who immediately attached himself to Frances, entering into earnest and private conversation with her. The younger girl, who regarded him as her own particular property, was terribly chagrined and provoked at this, and the young clergyman was made to feel himself quite de trop by her. While she was giving me an account of her grievances, Frances stood at my side, trembling, and shedding showers of tears. She now sobbed out a declaration that, although Mr. Carter had said he had but just left the bank, she felt sure he must have been drinking somewhere.

"For shame!" I cried. "How can you say such a thing of a man

like Louis Carter? No one ever saw him the worse for drink. How could you possibly even think it of him?"

"I have every right, at any rate, to ask what he was saying to you," Fenella interrupted, angrily.

"You shall know all about it at once," Frances answered, looking up. "When we came to the old bridge he was asking me to marry him."

Fenella looked unspeakable things, but her anger choked her voice for the moment.

"And you said?" I asked.

"What could I say that would have been half hard enough? I tell you he was not himself. He must have been drinking. He stumbled twice, and nearly fell down; and his eyes were blazing at me in such a terrible way. I asked him how he dared to say such things to me, after all that has passed, and I told him I would sooner die than marry a man that anyone could say had been mean and dishonourable."

"You said what you had no right to say," I remarked, angrily. "I never met a more provoking pair of girls in my life."

"He was not sober," she insisted, passionately. "He could not walk steadily."

"You stumbled twice as you came up the steps here," I said, dryly, "and yet you are quite sober. I don't consider girls should say such things, or ought even to let themselves think them, of men—especially of good men, like Louis Carter—unless there is no possibility of mistake about the matter. My idea is that there has been some most extraordinary misapprehension in this affair from the very beginning. Perhaps he thinks that Fenella is the elder, as I thought at first. He may have intended the valentine for you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Fenella, interrupting me indignantly. "Then pray, what can you make of all the things he said to me? of all the times he asked me if there was any hope for him?"

"Perhaps he did not understand how jealous you are," I answered, coldly. "He may have believed that you knew and understood his admiration for Frances. His questions probably referred to her."

"You may think what you like," was the angry reply, "but from the commencement he paid attentions to me, and to me only, even before he knew Frances. He may have turned off to her now. It is always the way. She set to work to charm him from me, at once, with her beauty, and of course she has succeeded. It is easy for her to have things as she wishes; but he is a mean, wicked, dishonourable man, and I congratulate her upon what she gets in him. But I will have my revenge some day."

Matters were going too far, and I took pattern by Frances, and began to cry. Fenella was soon in tears also, and then we presently kissed all round, and forgave each other.

The younger girl then said, magnanimously, "You may have him, Frances, if you wish to take such a mean fellow; but I will try and keep far away from you both, for I hate him with my whole heart, and I never can forgive anyone." She spoke half regretfully, but her lips again grew pale with angry emotion.

"You need not distress yourself about the matter," Frances answered, quietly. "I could never like anyone who had acted dishonourably."

"But he has not, I feel sure," I said. "It has been all a mistake."

"He has only wrecked my happiness for ever," Fenella observed, in tragical tones.

"I will never, never marry him," Frances sobbed, clinging to her aggrieved sister; and I knew she spoke with a resolute and obstinate heart.

We discontinued our attendance at the choir practice after this, but otherwise things appeared to go on much as usual. The girls took their music lessons as of old, and it was no doubt good discipline for them to be obliged to act as though nothing had happened. Fenella prospered and grew merry again very speedily under this self-restraint. She was ever ready once more to avail herself of any chance opening for flirtation that came in her way. Schoolboy, curate, vicar, or doctor, all were alike acceptable to her, if they were willing to allow her to amuse herself at their expense.

Frances was, however, no longer what she had been. Her former calm and even temperament was gone. When she fancied herself unnoticed she drooped languidly, and sat with idle clasped hands, as though weary of her life. At other times she was feverishly active and eager. Her cheeks burned on such occasions, and her hands trembled. I thought her far from well or strong, but she was resolute in declaring that there was nothing the matter with her.

Louis Carter, to my great distress, withdrew himself completely from me and from my husband. We could only mourn in secret over this estrangement, and over the sad change we perceived in him. He walked heavily, and with stooping shoulders, now, while a cloud of gloomy reserve had settled upon his face.

At last, one evening late on in June, my husband induced him to come in and take tea with us. The meal would have been an uncomfortable one had not the boys been present. Our organist had always been a somewhat silent man. Few good musicians are given to much talk. The habit of uncommunicativeness in which he had now enwrapped himself had, however, I am sure, grown almost as oppressive to him as it was to others. It appeared to me that he was continually dwelling upon some melancholy topic, and considering it in all its bearings. I guessed the subject of his thoughts, and I even fancied he was wishing to consult me upon it, for I found his eyes fixed, now and again, with a mournful, questioning gaze, upon my face:

but a wall of embarrassment had risen up between us since our last meeting.

We were alone together in the dusky drawing-room after tea, but conversation failed us even then, and at last I asked him to play to me. He went to the piano at once, and I sat near the window and watched his hands, as I listened to the river of melody which began to flow through the shadowy chamber. I saw that he had still his old habit of stooping as he played, as if to listen for what the notes would say, and of then suddenly raising his head in an attentive attitude, as though he were looking out and waiting for an answer from above.

I was in a dreamy trance of enjoyment, when the music suddenly came to an abrupt stop, and the player said slowly, "Your friends, the Miss Perrins, do not ever come to the choir practice now."

"They do not," I answered. At the moment I could think of nothing else to say.

"Could you tell me how it was that I offended Miss Frances Perrin?" he continued, hesitatingly.

I grew confused, and delayed a little before I faltered out the monosyllable, "No."

"I might have guessed not," he said, bitterly, and after that we sat for a while without speaking. At last I said quickly, "Why do you call her Miss Frances Perrin? she is the elder of the two girls."

An exclamation of pain floated over to me through the gloom, with a wailing sound; something as though it had been a prayer. He turned from the piano, and began speaking eagerly. "I did not know," he said. "I always believed she was the younger. Will you tell her ——"

But just at this moment a servant brought in candles, and then my husband joined us. He was full of a journey which he had just learned it would be necessary for him to take on the following day. There was business to be done in Weston, which was distant about thirty miles from the railway junction, and this, as I said before, lay ten miles from us.

I was shocked to see the terrible alteration that the past few months had wrought in our friend's appearance when I observed him by the full light now in the room. He looked ill and worn, and yet there was certainly, at this moment, a hopeful, animated gleam in his face which had not been there when John brought him to me, a couple of hours before, in the other chamber. He spoke, too, in readier and more lively tones, now, than he had used all the evening, as he told us that he, also, had engaged to go next morning to Weston, on banking affairs.

"The manager asked me to undertake some business there for him," he said, "and I agreed, not caring whether I went or stayed, although the weather is certainly unpleasantly hot and dusty for a long and

wearisome journey. As things are now, however," he added, speaking to me in whispered tones, "I think my own affairs here want so much immediate looking after that I should much prefer remaining at home."

It was arranged that my husband and Louis should take a cab together to and from the junction.

"What a pity Fenella and her friend could not go under your escort," I said, inadvertently; but I immediately checked myself, remembering that, under existing circumstances, it was much better that the organist should not meet his old acquaintance, at any rate for the present. The Midsummer vacation was just commencing, both at the College and school. Frances was to spend the holidays with me, and I hoped to send her back to the Academy in better health and spirits than she now enjoyed. Fenella was to start, next evening, for the country, with a schoolfellow, at whose home she had been invited to spend a few weeks.

Mr. Carter was with us very early next morning. He arrived before the cab came to the door. He was pale and heavy-eyed, but cheerful in tone and manner. "You look as if you had not slept, and yet as though you rather enjoyed lying awake," I said laughingly to him.

"Perhaps you are right in both surmises," he answered, with a smile. "You certainly are in the first. Nature is taking her revenge now, for I could fall off into a profound slumber at this moment, if I got a chance of doing so. I must keep wide awake to-day, however. I have endless accounts to go through in Weston, and then, coming home, I shall have a large sum of money in my hands. To-morrow, as you know, is market day here, and the manager expects to need a good deal of gold; besides which my pocket-book is to be filled with notes on his behalf."

He had a small valise in his hand.

"Is that meant for all the sovereigns?" I asked, pointing to it, and wondering at the unusual communicativeness of my friend.

He nodded.

"You must take care of it then," I said, sagaciously.

I stood on the doorstep to see the travellers drive off, and repeated my warning as they both waved me a final farewell.

The weather was very sultry, and they had a tiresome day. When they met in the evening, at the Weston Station, John was distressed to find that his companion wes completely worn out by the bodily and mental fatigues he had gone through. The train was so crowded that it was impossible for the two to travel together. My husband was provoked at this, as he was anxious to relieve his friend of all care and anxiety concerning his heavily laden valise. Under existing circumstances he was only able to see that Louis was comfortably ensconced in the corner seat of a first-class carriage. Having provided him with a newspaper, he was obliged to hurry off and secure a place for himself.

The train stopped for ten minutes about midway between Weston and the junction, and John got out here to look after his fellow traveller. Louis was then suffering from a racking headache. He was leaning forward, supporting his forehead upon his hands, and groaning with agony. The sudden stoppage of the train seemed to increase his sufferings, although, a moment before, he had attributed his torments to the rapid movement. He had thrust the precious valise beneath his feet, and another passenger had appropriated his copy of the *Times*.

"I feel as if I could give all I have about me for one drop of cold water," he said, looking up at John with a ghastly attempt at a smile. My husband brought him a glassful, and then proceeded to lay a wet handkerchief upon his aching brows. When this was accomplished, John was obliged to return to his seat. His patient was much better by the time the junction was reached. The two met Fenella and her friend here, and waited to see them off. The girls continued their journey by the train that the other travellers had just left.

IV.

In the meantime, Frances and I had been spending the day together very quietly. When I had her all to myself in the silent house—for all our boarders had departed—I told her what had occurred the previous evening, but I had hardly got through my short tale when I began to regret that I had mentioned the organist's name at all. My poor friend was not strong enough to bear any excitement, and she sobbed and cried until she made herself ill.

"Never talk to me about him again," she said at last, imploringly. "There are some things that never can come right in this world, when once they have gone wrong, and this one of them."

She shivered and trembled all through this hot day as though she had an ague fit.

We had taken tea, and my husband was rejoicing in being home again, when we were all startled by a loud and hurried knocking at the hall door. He was called away, and Frances and I waited anxiously, longing to know what was the matter. We both felt that foreboding of evil which so often fills the mind on the occasion of an unexpected summons coming at some unusual hour.

It seemed as though we were a long time kept in suspense; but at last John reappeared, in the act of drawing on his overcoat. His face was troubled and perplexed, and he looked uneasily at Frances.

"Carter has lost his pocket-book," he said. "There was a thousand pounds in it, in Bank of England notes. He has been with the police, and has telegraphed hither and thither, and now he wants me to drive

back with him to the junction. So you must not expect me home to-night until you see me, Mary."

"And it is the bank money!" I exclaimed, breathlessly. "But then, of course, they have the numbers of the notes down, wherever he got them."

"That is just what they have not," John answered, impatiently. "No one wrote them down, through some inexplicable carelessness. Come out and get this poor fellow some tea, or something of the sort, Mary. He is in my study."

He closed the door between us and our young visitor when I had followed him from the dining-room.

"I did not like to tell you before Frances," he said, "but I never, in all my life, saw a fellow in such a terrible state as Carter is in now. He came to me at first like a lunatic, and now he is behaving more as if he were a woman than a reasonable man. I have had him in floods of tears, like any girl. He thinks, and so do I, that after I got him the glass of water to-day, at the station, he must have either slept or fainted when the train again went on, and that his pocket-book then either dropped out of his pocket or was stolen from it. He reproaches himself bitterly for what he calls his carelessness; although the truth is that the poor fellow was more dead than alive just then, and was quite incapable of paying attention to anything."

"He is overwrought," I said. "He told me that he did not sleep at all last night."

I made some fresh strong tea, and administered it to my patient in silence before he left. As I could give him no comfort I thought it better to say nothing.

When Frances and I were alone together again, we went into the drawing-room, and sat there until near midnight. I sent her off to bed then, and waited up alone for John. He did not return home until the early day was dawning, and then he had no good news to tell. There were no tidings of the lost pocket-book. Time went on, and this was still the case. It seemed as though the matter were hopeless, for all searches and inquiries continued to prove fruitless.

Louis went daily, as of old, to the bank, where no one, I am sure, ever threw a glance of suspicion upon him, but elsewhere he was seldom seen in public. He no longer played the organ during the church services, nor did he instruct the choir any more. All these duties were delegated to his assistant. He shrank from notice with painful and morbid sensitiveness, believing himself an object of universal contempt. My husband could not persuade him out of the idea that he was now a dishonoured man, in consequence of what had occurred. He declined all entreaties to visit us, and it was a long time before I saw him again after that unhappy night when he had come to us in the first eagerness of his distress. I was much troubled at this, as I felt

impressed with a strange and strong conviction that the money would, sooner or later, be traced and restored. In spite of the ever growing improbability that this should happen, as the days and weeks went by, the persuasion was still with me, and I longed to try and impart some of my hopefulness to our poor friend. I also desired to make him aware of my sympathy with him.

Frances and I never talked of this sad affair, but I had quite relinquished my hope of sending her back to the Academy stronger and happier than she had left it. I began, indeed, to doubt whether she could ever return to the routine of school life, and my husband sometimes advised me to write to her friends and recommend that she should be recalled home. She grew more beautiful and ethereal looking every day, until we felt, at times, as if we had some gentle, wistful denizen of another world on a visit with us. John and I regarded her almost as if she were a child of our own, to be petted and loved and cared for; and she accepted and returned our affection with interest.

I was out alone one evening. On my way home I lingered upon the old bridge. I was leaning against the parapet, looking out at the sea, lit up by the red glow of sunset, when I heard many quick footsteps pass me by, while someone, walking with a slow and heavy tread, paused at my side. I turned round. Six grey monks went up the road in procession, and Louis Carter stood near me, hesitating, as if in some doubt as to whether or not he should delay. His gait was weary, his shoulders were bent, and I saw many silver threads gleaming in his dark hair. I put my two hands within his arm to detain him, uttering an exclamation of pleasure; but when his eyes met mine I started back, alarmed at the wild and desperate expression in them. He looked so utterly hopeless that I shuddered instinctively.

"I understand," he said, bitterly. "Of course you do not wish to be seen with me. I will go on."

"Oh, you must not; indeed, it is not that," I cried, my eyes filling with tears. "I was only sorry to see you so very—sad."

"What should a dishonoured man be but sad?" he said, heavily.

"I have been wishing so much to meet you," I exclaimed. "I want to tell you not to despair about this money. I feel sure—I know it will be found."

"Have you heard anything of it, then?" he asked, eagerly.

I was obliged to confess that I had not, but I did my best to instil some hopefulness into him concerning the loss. He seemed a little cheered and comforted by the sympathy I displayed in his trouble. He walked along at my side; and the load of care upon his brow really appeared to lighten as we talked. We were drawing near the College, when he inquired with sudden abruptness whether Frances was still with me.

"She is," I answered, laconically. I did not wish to talk of her, but unhappily he did.

"You believe that this money will be found," he said. "If it is, and if my character is thereby cleared from reproach, do you think I may try and explain matters to Miss Perrin? Is there hope for me with her?"

I could not think there was, but I have many times since regretted that I did not at the moment endeavour to persuade myself and him that all might yet come right. My heart being full of hopelessness, however, I made no reply, but pulled down my veil to hide from my questioner the tears that were streaming from my eyes. A sudden overwhelming sadness had fallen upon me.

"I understand," he said, speaking with a weary, unsteady voice. "I hate this place. I have always felt that some dreadful fate was awaiting me here." With that he turned and left me, giving me no farewell greeting of any kind.

I took Frances to the upper part of the town next day, where we listened to the band playing for a while; but the sun was hot, and she was ailing and confined to the house for nearly two days after this. On the evening of the second day we went out boating. We landed, after our excursion, underneath the old bridge. We saw Louis Carter up above us, leaning upon the wall as I had been doing when I met him, and looking out into the far distance. By the time we had climbed the ascent he had entirely disappeared.

Frances became very ill that evening. The doctor said she was suffering from a low fever, which must have been hanging about her for a long time. She grew worse as the days went by, and she was at times delirious. I was obliged to get a nurse to assist me in caring for her. She was very weak, and as there was much cause for alarm, I wrote to summon Fenella back when she had been three weeks absent.

On the evening before I expected her return I went out for a lonely walk, feeling sadly in need of some refreshing air. I went up the hill by the most unfrequented way, and then turned into a road leading down again to the sea behind the monastery, mentioned before.

A sweet-toned bell began to ring out when I had passed the grounds attached to this great building. I paused a moment to listen, and began to picture to myself the scene within the chapel, such as I imagined it to be when the strangely-dressed worshippers gathered for vespers. A lane ran at right angles with the road upon which I was. One of the grey monks suddenly turned out of this and approached me. I moved to the inner part of the path to allow him room to pass, but, to my very great amazement, he paused at my side. He was a young man; he wore a long, soft, fair beard, and had gentle, compassionate eyes. I should as soon have expected to hear words from our old church

steeple, and yet this stranger was actually addressing me. He spoke in clear and well modulated tones.

"I take a great liberty in troubling you thus," he began. "I believe, however, that you have a regard for that poor young man who has lost the money. My sympathies have been much awakened on his behalf. I would serve him if I could, but I know not how. Perhaps your husband could look after him. He is certainly not in a fit state to be left to himself. You may not be aware that he spends the greater part of every night now upon the old bridge."

With a low bow this strange new acquaintance of mine went his way, and from that day to this I have never seen him, to recognise him, again.

I hurried home full of renewed anxieties. I was intending to send John off at once in search of our unhappy friend, but when I reached the College I recollected that he was out, and would not be back until very late. He taught a class of young working men one evening in each week, and this night he was thus employed. I thought then of setting forth myself to call at the house occupied by Louis, but when I went indoors first, to inquire for Frances, I found she was worse, and had been asking for me. I could not leave her. Even had I been free the weather would now have interfered to hinder me from going out again. The sky had suddenly become overcast with clouds; rain had already begun to fall, and the wind was rising. There was every appearance of a coming storm.

I sat by Frances for an hour. She had been very weak and faint, but I hoped she was now sleeping. Her hand lay quietly in mine, and her eyes were closed. I was suddenly undeceived, however. She looked up and said, "I have been thinking of Mr. Carter. Do you believe that he really cares much for me?"

"I know he does," I answered. And then I told her what he had asked me concerning her at our last meeting.

"Is there any news of the lost money yet?" she inquired, feebly.

"There is not," I said, with a heavy sigh.

We were silent for a while, and then she asked me if I would write a note for her. "I don't think I could manage to do it for myself, now," she added, looking wistfully at her white, transparent hands.

"You may dictate a dozen letters to me to-morrow, if you will, I replied, with rash impulsiveness, "but to-night you must sleep."

"I cannot rest until this one note is written," she said, wearily and at last I humoured her, and got writing materials together. Her short epistle ran as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Carter,—I am very ill, but when I get better I hope you will come and see me; and I hope also that next year you will send me another valentine, because I did not know that the one you sent this year was intended for me.

"I am very sorry about the money you have lost. I hope it will be found; but I have five hundred pounds of my own, and I want you very much to borrow this from me, until you get back your pocket-book. It will pay half of what you owe to the bank.

"Yours sincerely, FRANCES PERRIN."

"Perhaps I ought to say, 'if I get better,'" my poor little patient said, slowly, when I had finished writing.

My voice grew husky as I kissed her, and murmured, "We will leave it as it is."

"Then you think I may send this note?" she whispered.

"Why not?" I replied. I felt as if Heaven were about to aid me in my purpose of administering consolation to Louis Carter, when I held this innocent and childish missive in my hand. "This letter will please the receiver much," I added. "John shall take it to him as soon as he returns home."

Now that Frances had her mind relieved for the moment she closed her eyes again, and really fell asleep this time, leaving me free to go downstairs.

When my husband came in he only waited to swallow a cup of tea before he set out on his new errand. He reappeared much sooner than I had expected. He was drenched with rain, and much fatigued, from wrestling with the storm now raging out of doors. His anxious face betrayed at once that he had no good news to tell. I took two letters out of his hand with an inquiring look.

"Read," he said, pointing to one, the envelope of which had been opened. The other cover contained, as I saw, the note I had so lately penned. I drew forth a sheet of paper, and as I did so an enclosure fell upon the ground at my feet. John picked it up, and held before me the long-lost photograph, which I had so perplexed myself about. I read:—

"Dear Friend,—I am leaving this place for ever, and as it is not likely that we shall ever meet again in this world, I write to bid you and Mrs. Grey farewell. The enclosed photograph is for her. I took it off her drawing-room table, some months ago, when I cherished vain hopes of being able to win the original for my wife.

"I constrain myself now to restore this treasure, as I have thought that it was perhaps this small dishonesty which has been the cause of my late affliction—which has brought upon me the imputation of the great crime, of which all must suspect me. The loss of this money has broken my heart.

"Ever yours faithfully, even to death,

"LOUIS CARTER."

"This was to have been brought to me to-morrow," my husband said. "Carter left early this evening on foot."

"I am sure we shall never see him alive again," I cried, tearfully. "The loss of the money has destroyed his reason, as well as broken his heart. No man in his senses could imagine it was any sin to have taken this poor little likeness. And then just see how he has ended his letter!"

It was hard and dreary work to parry the gentle inquiries made by Frances concerning the fate of her note. I am sure that she guessed that some new misfortune had occurred, of which she was not to be made aware. Before morning a new and more violent and dangerous access of fever came on than any from which she had yet suffered.

Fenella arrived early next day. I took her into my room, before allowing her to see Frances, in order to warn her against making mention of Louis Carter in the sick chamber.

I was pleased to see the younger girl back again, and she was most caressing and affectionate, and much subdued by her grief and anxiety about her sister. We sat close together, hand in hand, upon a low couch, while I related the history of all that had happened since she left. I concluded that she had not heard of the lost money, as, for many reasons, both Frances and I had studiously avoided mentioning the organist to Fenella in our letters. I therefore began at the beginning of the story, but as I proceeded I saw, by the expression of her face, that I was telling her no news. There was a gleam of angry enjoyment in her eyes, I fancied, as I dwelt upon the distress and suffering caused by the disappearance of the pocket-book. At last, I was shocked to see a smile of malicious pleasure hovering about her lips.

I dropped her hand suddenly. "Fenella," I cried, with bitter reproach in my voice, "will you never allow me to forgive you for all the trouble you have caused? for all the mischief you have done? Do you know that I believe the loss of this money has resulted in the death of Louis Carter, as good and honourable and kind a man as ever lived; and that it is most probable Frances will also die, when she discovers how matters are now?"

While I was speaking the bright glow of health faded quickly out of Fenella's face. Her features assumed an expression of horror and alarm, such as I had never seen displayed in any countenance before. She shrank away from me, uttering a moan of terrible distress. I knelt down beside her, and spoke more gently, being now full of self-reproach for my harshness. As soon as she could recover herself sufficiently, however, she rose up, and pushed me away from her. She then covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Do not touch me," she cried, passionately, shuddering as she spoke. "I can never be happy in all my life again, for I am a murderer. I had his money safe all this time. I only kept it to revenge myself upon him."

It was as she said. When she got into the railway carriage at the junction, the evening she left Redchester, she had almost immediately found a pocket-book at her feet. She opened it, and saw that it contained a good deal of money; but she also perceived, at once, who the owner was; and, on the spot, she resolved to keep her discovery private for a time, so as to punish the organist for what she called his barbarous ill-treatment of her, by letting him think that his property was irretrievably lost. She had, of course, no idea that the notes really belonged to the Redchester bank, nor did she at all suspect their value, for she never gave more than a mere cursory glance at the contents of her prize.

"I thought it would be dishonourable to pry into his secrets," she sobbed forth now.

"I think your conscience must have also warned you that it was neither honourable nor Christian-like to delay, even for one unnecessary hour, restoring the pocket-book to its owner," I said, sadly.

"It did, it did," she cried, in an agony of remorse. "But I persuaded myself that it was all fair to punish him. I tried to think I was doing everything that was necessary when I brought the thing back, untouched, to you, to return to him."

It would be quite impossible for me to give any just idea of how terribly distressing I found that day.

Frances lay at death's door, and Fenella sat beside her, hour after hour, looking indescribably miserable; while I wandered about from room to room, unable to rest anywhere.

The weather was oppressively hot, and the scorching beams of the July sun were blazing in all directions. Towards evening, however, a light breeze sprang up, and came, wafting refreshment to us, from the west. I went out on the steps to enjoy it, when the twilight shadows were gathering over the half-deserted town.

I was leaning against the door-post, with my eyes closed, when I felt a hand upon my arm, although I had heard no approaching footstep. I looked up, and saw, at my side, what I took, at first, to be the wraith, or ghost, of my poor friend, Louis Carter. But it was he, himself. He wore no hat, and looked as though he had been fiercely buffeted by the storm of the previous night: his clothes were laden with dust. He stood before me, stooping under the weight of unutterable weariness and depression.

"You see, I could not rest, after all, until I had bidden you farewell in person," he said. "I could not lie down in peace, also, without knowing for certain that Frances had gone before me. Some one had said she was dying, just before I went away from this. Was it true?"

"She is not dead," I said. "She is asleep, and will recover. Come and see her." I held his arm with both my hands, and drew him within the doorway, up the stairs and into my little friend's room. She

was not sleeping, as I had fancied. She saw and recognised her lover at once, seeming in no way disconcerted or surprised at his strange and wild appearance.

"You have come at last, then," she said, softly. "I am so glad, and I am sure, now, that the money must soon be found."

"It has been found already," I cried, joyfully.

And thus everything came right in the end, after all; more right, at least, than could have been expected; for though Frances recovered, and married the man she loved, the Louis Carter who returned to us that evening was never again quite what he had once been. There are afflictions sent to some of us which leave a sting for ever, as regards this life. His trial had been of this description.

In this world it is hard to straighten that which has once been made crooked; and Fenella, with all her sincere and bitter repentance, could not restore physical strength and energy to the man she had injured. She has been much sobered and improved by all that has happened, and she has lately married my brother.

Thus neither of the girls became a governess.

TO-MORROW.

What if we walk the wastes of life to-day,
  Weighed down by cares and sore of heart with sorrow?
There waits for us across the dreary way
  The golden dawn and splendour of to-morrow.
To-morrow our path shall blossom like the meads of May.

To-day from Heaven's peace we feel outcast,
  We marvel if God marks the falling sparrow,
And to the shorn lamb tempers the fierce blast—
  Ah, well! we shall get back our faith to-morrow.
To-morrow our doubts and fears and travails will be past.

To-day we hug our pains and nurse our smarts,
  And have no courage to pluck out the arrow
Pressing with venomed point into our hearts—
  But we shall be more firm and brave to-morrow.
To-morrow we shall more nobly, wisely act our parts.

To-day our souls are torn with death-like throes,
  But in the furrows scarred by torturing harrow,
The master of the seed-fields patient sows
  The harvest we shall reap with joy to-morrow.
To-morrow our wilderness shall blossom as the rose.

REMEMBRANCES OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

HOW A FIRST VIEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE STRIKES A STRANGER.

THE days of Turkish rule in Europe are numbered. At any rate, stagnation, the special characteristic of Mohammedan dominion, can no longer sway the capital of a great empire, once the seat of learning and civilisation.

Whatever may be the upshot of the perplexing "Eastern Question," there is no doubt that Western light cannot much longer be shut out. A change, and a radical change, must come over Turkey. She must awake from her sleep, longer than that of the famous seven sleepers in the "Gesta Romanorum"—a sleep that has rested on her government and her people ever since the fatal day when Mohammed the Second planted the crescent over the walls of the ancient capital of the first Christian Emperor.

Before light has been admitted into the narrow streets; before turbans, slippers, and yashmaks have disappeared for ever; I ask my readers to peep with me at the City of the Sultan, over which I saw the sun rise one fine September morning.

As I stood gazing from the deck of the steamer that had brought us from Malta my first emotion was one of disappointment.

The air was chilly, the landscape enveloped in mist, behind which rose, darkly and indistinctly, the red houses of the town; and above them, like dim shadows, loomed the mosques. All was undefined—the picture was crowded and muddled, without a principal object. Slowly our vessel threaded its way amid craft of every description into the harbour, and one by one the half-awakened passengers retreated to the cabin. When, after about an hour, refreshed by breakfast, we again emerged on deck, we were passing "Seraglio Point," the mist had cleared off, and there burst upon us the full glory of a scene that has few rivals in the world.

Springing, as it does, out of the waters, which wash the feet and enter beneath the walls of one of its finest palaces, Constantinople, at a first glance, has something unreal about it. I almost feared to close my eyes, lest, on opening them again, I should find the whole city had disappeared like the fairy scene in a pantomime.

Would not those toy-like houses of all colours, red, blue, and green; those graceful minarets, so charming in their Oriental novelty; those airy domes, clustered in bewildering profusion—would not all

these melt into air, and, "like the baseless fabric of a vision," dissolve, and leave not a wreck behind?

I was too entranced to speak. Mechanically I nodded assent, as a kind, loquacious "compagnon de voyage," willing to do the honours of the landscape, pointed to the shore, and said:

"That on the left is Stamboul, the true Turkish city. See, its houses rise like an amphitheatre, tier above tier, crowned by the mosques with tall minarets, whose warning points stand high above the earth, directing the imagination heavenward. Some of the mosques have as many as eight of these elegant monitors; for any pious person may build one, provided he endow it with funds to pay a muezzin or servant of the mosque, who, from its highest gallery, calls, with shrill cries, the faithful to prayer. Observe those old walls that have stood many a siege. They enclose Stamboul within a triangle. The stream beneath us, the Golden Horn, washes the north side of the triangle. That palace standing out into the water is called 'Seraglio Point.' There terminates the sea of Marmora. To your right, on the other side of the Golden Horn, you see Pera, the Frank quarter, between which and yonder Asiatic Scutari flows the never-ceasing current of the historic Bosphorus."

I was not sorry when the stream of my companion's eloquence was diverted into another channel. How could I enter into details, while every faculty was absorbed in admiration of the dazzling beauty of the scene before me?

As at the first glance, so do I now feel, at the latest retrospect, that the predominant impression made by Constantinople is its brightness, its colour. Sky, sea, houses, people, all are bright; a very kaleidoscope of tints.

All the hues of the rainbow were flashed before us, as swift caiques, with gaily-clad freights, darted under our bows.

Some of these boats, conveying great Pachas from their marine palaces on the Bosphorus to the city, were resplendent with paint and gilding. They were often rowed by ten or a dozen boatmen, who rose to their feet and sat down again at every stroke of the oars, and wore dark baggy trowsers and white shirts, made of that Eastern material that looks like lace insertion.

Large barges passed us conveying solemn-looking Turks by fifties and sixties; government employés, in dark blue coats and red fezes, who were on their way to their offices.

At last we ourselves and our belongings were transferred to a small boat, and landed at Tophana, the Wapping of Pera.

Before we were permitted to disembark, a custom-house official, with bare legs, and wearing a pink shirt and a dark blue cloak with a red lining, came, and, squatting himself at the end of the boat, ordered sundry of our packages to be unlocked. Instead, however

of examining anything, he retired out of sight with our dragoman, to arrange "backsheesh," another word for a bribe.

We could not learn that any duty was claimed, but the grand object for which official Turks exist seems to be "backsheesh," and no fish is too small for their net. Indeed, in this misgoverned land, the universal maxim seems "chacun pour soi," and nobody for the profit, credit, and honour of the nation.

Any romantic idea one may have formed of the city when looking at it from the water; any notion of its having been fairy built; vanishes before the too sensible reality of its dirty, uneven streets. Houses, old and new, large and small, red, green, brown, blue, and white, cast amidst mud and stones on very uneven ground, form the dirty, crooked, narrow lanes, not streets, of the city of the Eastern Kaiser.

It may be truly asserted of curiosity that it increases by exercise, and becomes more voracious the more it is fed. However absorbing the interest with which we enjoy a new scene, there is ever a desire to penetrate beyond what we see, a wish to become familiar with what we are compelled to pass unexplored. So, on our way from the landing-place to the hotel, the very strangeness of everything that met our eyes tempted us sorely to stop for closer examination. I wanted to inspect every stall at the fruit market through which we passed; to make for the little neglected cemetery, whose dilapidated tombs and prowling dogs were close at hand; to ask some of the solemn "Arabian Nights" looking Turks, who were seated on boards at their shop-doors, if they had lately seen "the three calenders, all sons of kings," pass that way; to peer under the "yashmaks," or veils, of the ladies, who in coloured wrappers, loose and long-sleeved, went sliding and waddling along, gracelessly endeavouring to keep their heelless slippers on their feet. But no; for to-day, at least, our curiosity must be kept within bounds. En avant—our dragoman is a despot—and we must submit to be taken without further delay to the Hotel d'Angleterre, introduced to fame by the pen of the author of Eothen.

THE PASSAGE OF THE GOLDEN HORN.

When Ibrahim, the portly, civil, imperturbable dragoman, announced that a carriage was ready to convey us to Stamboul, we were amazed to find, before the door of the hotel, not a native vehicle drawn by oxen or mules, and tinkling with bells, but a sadly worn-out ramshackle of a britzska, with heavy cart wheels and rope harness. The horses were gaunt and bareboned. The driver, a variegated and decidedly dirty Turk, sat on a small board close to the tails of the horses, whence, by some marvel, he directed our course. The ordinary box seat was wanting.

Nothing impresses a stranger with the difference between this city by the Bosphorus and even the smallest Western town more forcibly than the almost total absence of carriages, and the contrast between those that are seen and any that have ever been met before.

Our party falling short of John Gilpin's complement of "precious souls," five of us were packed, with some difficulty and much laughter, within the vehicle, whilst our cavaliers accompanied us on horseback.

Just after starting we met a gay native coach—a telekah. I wish one could be seen in Long Acre. In it four veiled ladies were seated, of course à la Turque. The carriage was resplendent with yellow, and the canopy decked with numberless red tassels, which were repeated, with the addition of bells, on the harness of the mule.

From after experience I can aver that a more thoroughly uncomfortable machine in which to go a-pleasuring than a telekah can hardly exist.

On a smooth road, and suspended on the best springs that were ever turned out of a London coachbuilder's, chair-sitting mortals would soon be tired, and perhaps cramped, after reclining on the softest cushions, with one leg tucked away, and the other planted at an angle of forty-five. When added to this discomfort you and your partners in misfortune are continually jolted toward a common centre; and when, moreover, the carriage being entirely guiltless of springs, you are shaken and tossed about until you begin to have unpleasant reminiscences of shipboard; I think it must be admitted that in private conveyances, as in other things, "the sick man" needs to mend his ways.

The occupants of this telekah excited and evidently reciprocated our attention. The eyes alone of these houris could be distinctly seen. The rest of them was enshrouded in veil and robe. Those almond-shaped, long-lashed eyes were certainly bewitching, and their lustre was increased by the kohl or antimony with which the under lids were stained. The eyebrows were painted so as to appear to meet over the nose, which would be considered a disfigurement among ourselves. It was easy to see, through the almost transparent "yashmaks," that the fair dames added an artificial hue to their cheeks.

The narrowness of the road, which obliged our carriage to come to a standstill while the other passed, alone enabled me to make these observations.

Once on the move it was useless to dream of indulging our natural desire to gaze at the passers-by; we were obliged to be on the alert to preserve ourselves from the dangers of the way. The late Sultan took no heed of the locomotion of his subjects, consequently the roads of his capital city were never mended. In good truth they never were made. When houses were first promiscuously placed here and there, as suited the taste or convenience of the builders, it was

nobody's business to pay any regard to the spaces between the structures; so there they have remained in their pristine roughness.

Although I am told that lately a tramway has been made at Pera for the accommodation of restless Franks, Constantinople, at the time of my visit, boasted of neither cart, nor waggon, nor any other means of carrying merchandise, building materials, goods of any description, except on the backs of mules or donkeys, or on the broad shoulders of Bulgarian hammals or porters.

From their untidy burdens the highways were continually receiving contributions, as well as all the rubbish that accumulated from other sources. Stones, bricks, wood, all sorts of débris, are dropped in the process of transmission; and as Oriental civilisation has not yet arrived at the institution of a scavenger—except in as far as the long-backed, short-legged, foxy-coloured, bushy-tailed dogs perform that office—all fruit rinds, vegetable stalks, broken crockery, old shoes, animals, and all other kinds of dirt and refuse are cast into the roads.

After once walking along the streets of this city, one easily understands the difficulty, and even danger, a Turkish gentleman, like Abou Cassem, in the never-to-be-forgotten story, may experience in his endeavours to rid himself of an old pair of slippers.

Along these uneven, dirty, dusty roads we were jolted and bumped. Now we were nearly turned out on this side, and anon, by way of balancing matters, were all but jerked out on the other. The descents were occasionally so steep that we trembled lest we should be precipitated over the horses' heads. A few minutes after, as we ascended some miniature acclivity, we were obliged to cling frantically to the sides of the vehicle to avoid being shot out behind.

But the grand tug of all was that which finally pulled us over the bridge that then connected Pera with Stamboul. I am told that it has been lately replaced by a fine stone structure.

This bridge, whose existence will ever haunt my dreams, somewhat resembled the boat bridges over the Rhine, but it was much wider. Down the centre was a bar or railing, and carriages going and coming had their respective sides. Instead of opening for the passage of vessels, it had at each end a steep arch, under which all the river craft passed.

Before attempting to pass over these arches in a carriage, I thought, when we were at the summit of one of them, a rich man ought to have made his will, and a poor one would have been wise to assure his life, for verily it was a perilous adventure. The horses, poor starved brutes, strained and stumbled up the wooden steps placed to assist their climbing; the coachman whipped and shouted; benevolent pedestrians seized hold of the spokes of the heavy wheels; the carriage cracked and creaked; some of our party shrieked; in fact, it was "such a getting up stairs," as I hope never again to encounter. We all, in dire affright,

clung to each other, and to the sides of the carriage, breathing a vow that only on foot would we ever after attempt the passage of the Golden Horn.

A PEEP AT THE LATE SULTAN.

After enduring for months the burning sirocco blasts at Malta, how refreshing was the north wind that greeted us as we drove pleasantly along the heights above Pera. As we inhaled the cool, invigorating breeze, we thought of those we had left behind on "Melita's desolate shore," and how they were plodding through the never changing, ever wearying daily drive and ride.

With verdureless Malta in our memories, our delighted eyes scanned with ecstacy the beautiful landscape before us, and rested with a feeling of infinite satisfaction and relief on the green hills between which flowed the Bosphorus.

Never before had I so thoroughly appreciated the joyous repose, the contented delight, that is conveyed to the senses by nature's grand harmonious mingling of blue and green. The weary sight, that has in vain sought refuge from the scorching sun; which in one blinding glare confuses the shimmering blue of the sea, the dazzling amber of the rocks, and the furnace-like glow from stone buildings; welcomes with rapture spreading foliage and verdant lawns: not alone from the associations they may awaken, but positively from physical causes. Monsieur Chevalier has demonstrated that looking successively at several shades of red so affects the retina that we cannot, after a while, distinguish one shade from another; but the instant the eye falls on anything green its discriminating power is restored. Consequently, after being baked in the oven, Strada *Forni*, of Valetta, I seemed to obtain a new, or rather to recover an old sense, as I gazed on the green hills above Constantinople.

We were on our way to witness the arrival in state of the Sultan at a small mosque in which he delighted to offer up his prayers.

Descending from the carriage, and passing through a file of soldiers, we were stationed on the low wall of a cemetery opposite the mosque. The people in the road below us were prevented from encroaching on the path of royalty, as they would be in England, by two files of soldiers. These guards were clothed in ill-fitting, coarse uniforms, made on the Prussian model, in which they seemed ill at ease, and had a slouching, untidy appearance, very unlike what we are accustomed to consider soldierlike.

The scene, with the Bosphorus and the wooded hills of the opposite Asiatic shore as a background, was novel and exciting.

Turks in all varieties of costume passed to and fro. Some wore flowing robes, others short embroidered jackets, cut up in a point

behind, long shawls twisted round their waists, full trousers fastened at the knee and hanging nearly to the ankle, and red or blue buskins. Very few wore turbans, but only the red fez cap, with a large tassel falling from the crown, to protect the back of the head from the sun. These tassels are very large, long, and full, and hang down so as to cover the top of the spine.

Great numbers of women were assembled, arrayed in their best attire, for this was Friday, the Mohammedan Sabbath—esteemed the luckiest day in the week. Many were, like ourselves, seated along the edge of the cemetery, which, according to custom, was raised some three or four feet above the road. They sat in groups, on rugs and shawls, and among them were many sweet children.

His Highness not being blessed with a love of punctuality, the spectators were kept a long time beyond the hour for his expected arrival. I was tempted to take out my sketch-book, in order to bring away with me a reminiscence of a pretty child and his picturesque costume. Over a green tunic he had a pink jacket, from beneath the sleeves of which hung those of the under garment. A fantastically tied handkerchief covered his head, and below mauve-coloured trousers peeped pretty, fat feet. His face was lovely; but before the rosy cheeks and dark eyes, with their long lashes, were transformed to my paper, our dragoman, in an agitated tone, entreated me to put up my drawing materials. The mother of the child was in a violent rage with me, asserting that the "Giaour"—meaning the infidel—was bewitching her darling. The poor woman imagined that I was stealing the soul of her child, for she had been taught that whoever draws or represents a human form must at the Day of Judgment supply it with a soul, or remain for ever in Gehenna, or hell. This at least was how the dragoman explained the poor woman's frantic behaviour. The more enlightened Turks, without precisely discrediting the superstition, profess to read the verse of the Koran from which it derives its origin in different manners. Some assert that nothing that casts a shadow may be represented, while others are contented to believe that as long as a perfect figure is not produced there is no harm.

My little model belonged evidently to a mother of the old school, for he was expeditiously caught up and hidden under a pile of shawls, whilst the woman talked in shrill tones, and gesticulated at me with flashing eyes. One of my companions turned round, and smiling amiably desired Ibrahim to tell my enemy we admired her very much. This it seemed would be adding fuel to fire, and we were cautioned not to look at her, as she might think we were envious of her, and casting on her "the evil eye." This superstition, from which even the Italians are not free, is one of the greatest barriers to progress to be found in the East. Its wretched victims not only attribute "the evil eye" to unbelievers; but, besides, never feel certain that a glance from one of

their own faith will not render unholy and pernicious everything animate or inanimate on which it falls. Happily the superstition is not universal among the Turks, as it is among the Egyptians.

Very little real good is done by a wealthy Turk, here and there, being sent to Paris or London to pick up Western civilisation; nothing will really enlighten the nation but the education of the women. The granting them freedom before they know how to use it is beginning at the wrong end. Knowing nothing of modesty, honour, or self-restraint of any description, it is desirable that they should keep a dangerous power—their beauty—out of view, and that until they have been taught morality and decorum they should be subjected to the only force they are capable of understanding—physical force.

Our dragoman asserted that, as a rule, Turkish men cared very little about their women retaining the veil, but that they themselves, "surtout les vieilles et les laides," are great sticklers for old ways. However, the ladies, of Constantinople at least, have become very lax as regards concealing the face, for the yashmaks of many that I saw were of the most transparent tulle. The falling off from the time-honoured traditions of the Prophet is deplored by many an ancient conservative Turk, who remembers that, until the introduction of heterodox Western ideas and habits, every good Mussulman wore either red or yellow slippers. Now such a thing is scarcely to be seen on a man's foot in Constantinople; the women alone stick to their colours. Fortunately, the good mother's wrath and her attention were diverted from me by the opportune advance of the cortége accompanying the Sultan.

Some twenty or thirty splendid horses, richly caparisoned, were led past us by grooms, and were followed by a troop of cavalry, after whom rode, two and two, about forty of the Pachas. They were on spirited horses, which they managed well, although the shortness of their stirrups, andthe extreme obesity of most of them, prevented them from appearing to us elegant riders. They wore blue frock-coats, European trousers, and red fezes. A crescent of diamonds was suspended from each man's neck. They all looked grave enough to be going to a funeral. One who rode alone, and was twice as fat as the others—I pitied his poor horse—was pointed out as the Grand Vizier. His countenance was open and good-natured, and he had a clear, quick eye. The Capudan Pacha, who had married a sister of the Sultan, was a remarkably handsome, intelligent-looking man. We were told that he was a great admirer of French literature, and that he delighted in reading Lamartine's poetry aloud to his one wife! The Pachas were followed by ten of the Sultan's favourite horses, magnificent creatures. The saddles and housings were of crimson velvet, bordered with gold embroidery. At each corner of their saddle-cloths was a large bouquet of diamonds. The Sultan himself was dressed just as when he

appeared so frequently, a few years since, before the English public; but the collar of his coat blazed with diamonds, and an enormous one flashed in the hilt of his sword. Whether the soldiers sought to shield their eyes from the lightning glare of the diamonds, whether they feared to look on "the brother of the sun," or whether it was a simple matter of etiquette, I cannot tell; but certainly, the instant the Sultan appeared in sight, every one of his guards cast his eyes on the ground, and did not raise them again until his Highness had passed. Probably this custom may have arisen from the fear of "the evil eye."

As I gazed at the Sultan I could not help thinking that there was a tinge of melancholy mixed with the extreme gravity of his countenance. Well might he look grave, for certainly he began his reign, like his amiable contemporary, Pope Pius IX., with the noble intention of reforming abuses, of living more simply, of spending less money than his predecessors had done. But, alas! the prejudices, the ignorances, the love of greed, and the jealousies which surrounded him, brought him to the very last rung of the ladder of disgrace and dishonour—to dethronement and death.

But I must return to my seat on the cemetery wall. After the officers of the royal household had passed, the cortége was closed by a dozen mounted grooms, bearing on their backs leather sacks, destined to receive the petitions which are thrust forward at every place where the Sultan stops whenever he appears in public. None are ever rejected; and sometimes as many as five thousand are put into the bags during one progress.

In endeavouring to catch a glimpse of the procession, one of our party, whose sweet countenance was a true index to her gentle mind, accidentally approached very near to the carpet on which three women were seated. It required all the eloquence of our dragoman, who, I feel sure, was inventing all sorts of fables as to our position and importance, to save us from being beaten. We were glad to make a hasty retreat, and poor Ibrahim gave a sigh of relief when he had packed us into the carriage out of the way of danger.

THE BAZAAR.

Persons from the Frank quarter visiting the vast enclosure devoted to commerce at Stamboul must thread their way along narrow, dirty lanes, and pass through the court of the Mosque of Bayazid, or Bajazet, famed for its monoliths of green stone and jasper.

In this court live, and are maintained at the public expense, hundreds of pigeons, said to be descendants of the very bird that by miraculous interposition saved the life of the Prophet of Islam. It is related that

when Mohammed fled from Mecca to escape from the fury of the Koreishites, incited by his implacable foe, Abu Sofian, he and his father-in-law, Abu Beker, took shelter in a cave in Mount Thor, about an hour's distance from the city. On hearing the near approach of the pursuers, Abu Beker, in alarm, exclaimed, "They are many, we are but two." The Prophet rejoined, "Nay, there is a third, for God is with us," and immediately a miracle rewarded his pious faith. By the time the Koreishites reached the cave, an acacia tree had sprung up, a pigeon had built a nest, and laid two eggs in it, and a spider had woven its web across the entrance. The pursuers turned away disappointed, and the fugitives were saved. None of the sacred pigeons are ever killed; indeed, a wilful injury to one of them is said to be punished with death. Their number is kept within bounds by frequent gifts of pairs to distant mosques and to privileged individuals.

The bazaar comprises miles and miles of narrow lanes intersecting each other. They are covered with arched roofs, through which light is admitted but sparingly, because with it enters heat. On each side of the lanes are shops. These are, for the most part, not more than six or eight feet long, by four deep. They are fitted with shelves, on which the goods are ranged, and have no windows. But a large shutter or flap, which is drawn up and fastened to the roof during the day, closes the whole in during the night, and is very suggestive of a locker on shipboard. A row of low counters runs along the front of the shops. On these the masters sit cross-legged, or with one foot under them, quietly smoking their pipes, and languidly transacting business with customers, who not unfrequently seat themselves in like manner, while they drive a slow bargain, and murder precious time.

People following the same trade occupy the same street.

Near the entrance of the bazaar are found the trades of least importance, such as sellers of beads, combs, and spoons. There are whole streets with shops full of the last articles of every material, from wood and bone to silver and gold, adorned with coral and precious stones. Here, too, may be seen the chopsticks, which remind one of the vampire lady in the story, who in her husband's presence ate nothing but rice, which she picked up grain by grain. One can understand how her rose-tipped fingers manipulated the dainty machine for which advanced civilisation, always in a hurry, even in eating, has substituted a many-pronged fork.

Very extensive are the stores of wearing apparel: shawls from Cashmere, Paris, and Paisley; golden tissues and costly embroidered muslins from India; silks from Damascus, Brusa, and Lyons; English cottons, Irish linens, Manchester prints of gaudy Oriental designs, Persian carpets; every imaginable article is here collected for sale. The boot and slipper shops are among the most attractive, exhibiting dandy

Paris boots and American goloshes by the side of clumsy yellow wellingtons with slippers to match, and broad turn-up-toed black shoes lined with red. Some of the slippers, embroidered and worked with seed pearls and diamonds, were really beautiful. We saw one pair bought by an English nobleman for eight pounds, but many were much more costly.

Our first purchase gave us great amusement. One of our party desiring to buy a dressing-gown for her absent husband, we were conducted to a place where the streets, running at right angles, were filled with shops devoted exclusively to the sale of the usual outside garments worn by the Turks. At a sign from our dragoman the proprietors of eight or ten shops jumped upon their counters with an agility which at once told us that the majority of them were not Turks, but Greeks. When we were still distant from them, some dozen men, each trying to outvie the other, held aloft a gorgeous robe. Of course every man recommended his own wares, but as we understand not a word, and the good Ibrahim remained placidly watching his employer's eye, all came very soon to dumb show. If any of us looked specially at one man's gown, we were tapped on the shoulder, and with insinuating gestures invited to inspect something more magnificent at a rival establishment. After veering about from one counter to another, selecting a gown first here, then there, until we most of us became impatient, a handsome green and gold dress was positively chosen.

Directly Ibrahim's keen observation convinced him that matters had arrived at a point when his talents might come into play, he stepped forward, and the battle began between him and the shopkeeper, who as a matter of course asked an extravagant price. After listening with considerable amusement to tones, on the one side eager, persuasive, and even fierce, and on the other careless, prevokingly nonchalant, and derisive, we left the combatants to fight it out, and sauntered on. In about a quarter of an hour Ibrahim rejoined us—but without the dressing-gown. Our countenances fell, but he smilingly assured us that, in spite of his antagonist having positively refused the price offered, the article would certainly be ours. In good truth, after a considerable time the repentant shopkeeper followed us with the parcel, which, on receiving a trifling extra backsheesh, he let us have for £5.

In one of the largest and prettiest shops in the bazaar, where perfumery and beads only were sold, we bought attar of roses, musk, sandal-wood, and other essences, together with beads of all sorts of materials and colours. The Mohammedans, even more than Roman Catholics, use rosaries—indeed, they have them perpetually between their fingers. Independent of any religious use they may serve, they seemed to me to be used as a watch-chain, a bunch of keys, or the ends of a moustache often are elsewhere by nervous or fidgety people.

Rosaries are to be had at all prices, from one shilling to twenty pounds. The most prized are of amber, and the next in value of malachite. Some very cheap ones are made of a black composition, scented, gilded, and stamped into stars and crescents; others are manufactured of bitumen from the Dead Sea, and coloured black, green, or red. Whilst we were making our purchases, and turning over everything in this most amusing shop, we were invited to take coffee. To each of us was handed a small filigree silver cup, pointed at the bottom so that it would not stand; within this one of china filled with coffee was placed. We were not then accustomed to the Oriental style of serving coffee, consequently we allowed the grounds to settle, and found the whole a most unpalatable mess. When well made and drunk quickly while the froth is on it, and before it settles into a thick dark mass, it is refreshing and full of aroma; but at best it will not bear comparison with a cup of good French café noir.

In our progress through the bazaar we had observed several much-frequented shops, with clean cool-looking marble counters, on which lay what looked like rows of alabaster paper-weights. Some of these identical things, floating in milk, were served to us in saucers after the coffee. They were, I fancy, composed of ground rice or something analogous to it; but the flavouring was exquisite. Why cannot our pastrycooks vary their perpetual display of indigestible buns and greasy tarts with some tempting dainty of this description? We found the polite perfumer's such a good point whence to observe the motley groups flowing incessantly along, that we gladly remained there an hour or more before visiting the jewel, drug, and other markets.

The variety of people and costumes that passed before us was astonishing, and seemed quite to justify the supposition that on visiting Constantinople a learned and reverend gentleman of our acquaintance, who already spoke sixty-three languages and dialects, had "picked up the rest" in the bazaar. Almost the rarest costume was that of the pure, old-fashioned, unmitigated Turk. Indeed, except in the picturesque drug market, we rarely saw a turban rise, fold after fold, a foot high. The handsome Parsees, in their curiously-shaped black caps, rising straight from the forehead in a tall peak, and sloping off to a few inches behind, were very numerous. Large faced, good-humoured looking, strong-limbed hammals or porters, who are mostly Bulgarians, toiled under heavy weights, in red jackets embroidered with gold, dark-blue baggy trowsers, and buskins to match. The women, in very long, scanty paletot-like dresses, with sleeves down to the ground, their heads covered with hoods, and their faces more or less hidden by yashmaks, looked like bright perambulating bundles. They afforded us infinite amusement by their awkward scrambles after their heelless slippers. To keep their long robes out of the dirt, they frequently hold them so

high as to exhibit, between the tops of their boots and the fastenings of their trousers, bare legs.

THE DERVISHES.

If you have been to Constantinople, and have not seen the Dervishes perform their peculiar rites of devotion, you have seen nothing. These exhibitions are among the most curious, the most mysterious, and, possibly, mystical of all that are to be seen, not only in the East, but all over the wide world. The ceremonies are performed by two different orders of religionists, in their respective houses or convents, at opposite sides of the Bosphorus—the dancers at Pera, and the howlers at Scutari. They resemble each other only in their fanaticism, and in the gravity and earnestness with which they go through their frivolous and revolting parts.

On our way to see the Dancing Dervishes we stopped to buy slippers, as it was suggested that it might not be desirable, even over our walking boots, to put on those to be had on hire at the entrance of the monastery, and that, moreover, we should require them in many other places we contemplated visiting. The Turks never tread on the floor of a mosque, nor any other sacred place, with the same shoes in which they have been walking elsewhere. The men either enter barefooted, or put on slippers over their ordinary shoes. The women retain their clumsy, theatrical-looking yellow boots, which reach midway to the knees, and cast off the slovenly heelless slippers with which they go abroad. As a Mussulman, when he prays, touches the ground with his knees, then with his hands, on the backs of which he rests his forehead, and as these "flexions" are made at every recurrence of the word "Allah," the precaution of not carrying into their temples the external dirt and mud is a wise one. At the hour for prayer, wherever he may be—on the house-top, in the street, crossing the desert, pacing the deck of a Western steamer—the poorest Mussulman, if he have not a proper prayer-carpet or even a shawl at hand, will not "make dirt" of himself by kneeling on the bare ground; he will rather take off one of his garments, and, prostrating himself upon it, so perform his devotions.

Accordingly, on reaching the door of the monastery, we put on the slippers of purity, and entered an octagonal building, where the dancing ceremony had just commenced.

In a large flat-roofed chamber we heretics were placed amid a crowd of believers under a low gallery, which seemed to stifle us. This gallery, having a thick latticed screen, was appropriated to Turkish ladies, but a small portion of it, opposite to us, was open, and occupied by a band of musicians, and a Dervish, who read aloud, in a

nasal, monotonous tone, passages from the Koran. In the centre o the chamber, divided from the spectators by a balustrade, about twenty of the fraternity were, one by one, turning slowly in a circle to the mournful accompaniment of the shrill pipes and drums of the musicians above. The dancers wore flower-pot shaped felt hats, and ample brown cloaks, confined to the waist by leather belts. This turning was but an initiatory proceeding, for by degrees the cloaks were discarded, the wild plaintive music of the flutes, with which the drums kept up a monotonous tom-tom, increased in speed, and the dancing, or rather spinning, began in earnest. The dancers, in white jackets crossed over the breast, and full expanding, bell-like petticoats, reaching to the ankle, moved with grace and extreme celerity. It was quite astonishing to see how they kept a perfect circle, no one ever touching even the hem of his neighbour's garment. Each man's arms were stretched out at full length, and slightly elevated, one hand having the palm turned to the ground, the other to the ceiling. Their feet were bare. One never left the ground, the heel serving as a pivot on which the body turned. What the other foot did towards the spinning I in vain endeavoured to discover.

Whilst the dancing was going on, an old sheikh, in a green robe and turban, showing that he claimed to be descended from the family of the Prophet, sat in a recess near the "Kiblah," or altar, chanting the "Fatchah," or Mussulman creed, as he passed bead after bead through his fingers. The name of Allah occurring very often, and it being necessary at every repetition of it to make a "flexion" to the ground, the old man was constantly swaying himself backwards and forwards. All the sons of Islam present did the same, and the monotonous movement becoming infectious, I too could not help swaying myself to and fro until I became quite giddy. The wild swirl of the flutes every minute became more rapid and exciting, the dancers turned quicker and quicker, until they seemed to spin past us, and the whole scene swam before me in sickening confusion. Then gradually the music died away in melancholy minor cadences, the pace of the dancers slackened, and one by one, after resuming their brown mantles, they seated themselves, as if in meditation, round the central enclosure. The reader in the gallery again intoned some sentences from the Koran, the Dervishes by turns walked up to the old sheikh, bent their heads to the ground, kissed his hand, received his benedicdiction, and departed to their shops, or whatever else may have been their daily avocations.

The exhibition of the Howling Dervishes is of a very different and far less pleasing character.

Under a low gallery, which, from being almost dark, added to the unpleasantness of everything, we were spectators of this most unique and disgusting performance. The heavy, suffocating fumes of incense,

which, though very pungent, did not disguise a more noxious effluvium, made me, in a few minutes, feel sick and drowsy. In the centre of the floor sat, facing each other, four ancient Dervishes, who, with their "treble pipes," now in chorus, now singly, kept up a shrill discordant chant, every now and then clapping their hands as they accelerated the measure. Behind them about twenty fanatics ranged themselves in a semi-circle, and rocked from foot to foot, backwards and forwards, then from side to side, as they howled in interrupted breathings the Mohammedan confession of faith, "La Maha il Allah!" (There is no God but God.) They all shouted and moved exactly together in time with the music, laying a stress on the syllables as they changed feet. Their movements and their utterances became more and more rapid as they warmed to their work, until the sound emitted by these frantic maniacs was something between a grunt and howl, amidst which no words were distinguishable. The actors in this scene, unlike the dancers, were not all saints, nor even Dervishes, but the arena was free to any excited bigot who wished to make an exhibition of himself, or who felt he had "a call" that way. Like the converts at a meeting of ranting Methodists, the howlers rose promiscuously from among the audience, being without doubt led by old offenders. So peculiar and so almost maddening was the scene, that it cannot be surprising that the ignorant and fanatical believers in the religious value of the performance should sometimes from spectators be tempted to become sharers in the frenzied rite. Some of the miserable devotees worked themselves into a perfect ecstacy, moving arms, legs, and head. A repulsively ugly negro, who was specially energetic, shouted, jumped, threw himself into frightful contortions, till his eyes seemed as though they would start from his head; and his voice as he ejaculated the Mussulman's words of praise—"Ya-hou, ya-hou!"—sounded like that of a London pavior hard at work. I was heartily glad when, slowly, the noise subsided, and each breathless howler having kissed and been blown upon—a complimentary proceeding—by the sheikh, we were permitted to escape into the open air. That dreadful negro has ever since been a true "bête noir" to me, for I never think of things frightful and ugly without his hideous visage presenting itself to my memory.

TAKING IN CARGO AT SMYRNA.

On taking our passage from Constantinople to Malta, we were not a little pleased to learn that we should not only touch at Smyrna, but that we should probably anchor there a couple of days, and be able to make excursions on shore. Alas, why and how our joy was modified will presently appear.

We hardly gave ourselves time to admire the beauty of the azure-waved bay, or the picturesque aspect of the town, above which, on the face of the mountain, were clusters of houses, here and there a mosque with graceful minarets, and two or three cypress-marked cemeteries, the whole crowned by a romantic-looking ruined castle. Nor did we then stay to admire the more distant hills, amid which ran a valley whose deep shades of foliage invited the eye to penetrate into its purple-tinted recesses. We were all impatience to land and visit the bazaar. On approaching it we found our progress impeded by what I took for bales of merchandise, but on perceiving some movement in the mass I made a nearer inspection, and discovered a string of five or six camels lying in the path. The sight of these ungainly animals made one realise better than anything else the being in Asia. The popular idea in Europe respecting the "patient camel" is extremely erroneous. They are strong and capable of enduring hunger, thirst, and fatigue; but they are ugly, grunting, grumbling, sighing brutes, whose complaints, under the very lightest loads, made me think of the epithet Miss Harriet Martineau bestowed on them. If any luckless living creature stand in the camel's path, unlike the horse or elephant, he does not stop or move on one side, but bears on, regardless, senseless, over the impediment. It happened to me several times in the crowded lanes to be suddenly startled by the dangerous proximity of one of these creatures, sighing as it tramped along.

The bazaar at Smyrna, though very poor compared with that of Constantinople, was amusing. The shops are nearly all kept by Greeks and Armenians—handsome, but very cunning-visaged. Many of them wore their bright and elegant native costumes of richly embroidered jackets, and full, many-plaited white petticoats, some of which are fifty-five yards round, but so admirably adjusted that they set close to and take the form of the wearer's figure. The Greek men carry to excess the dandyism of a small waist. I am told that the scarf which is so ornamental is sometimes bound so tightly round the figure as to leave a black mark on the skin where it presses.

One of the sights that every stranger must see in Smyrna is the packing of figs for the English market. All the best figs brought here grow in the vicinity of Smyrna. At the proper season they are gathered and spread out in the sun to dry. When fit, they are packed in tall baskets, put on the backs of camels, and so brought into the town, and shot out on to the floors of great sheds or barns. Here a number of women and children, mostly Armenians, are employed in getting them ready for packing. Each fig is placed in the left hand, and so pressed with the right thumb that the little stalk is in the centre of a circle. By the position of the stalks it may be infallibly told whether figs come from Smyrna or from Spain. As each fig is pressed, it is passed on to a man to be packed in a drum or box, on the top of

which, after being well filled, three or four bay leaves, steeped in salt and water, are placed. This assists the crystallising process. With some reluctance I tasted one of these figs, presented to me by a kindly but, alas, not too clean hand. Its flavour was insipid and sickly. Indeed, figs packed in September are not considered fit for the table earlier than Christmas.

On returning to our steamer for the night we found all on board bustle and noise. They were taking in cargo—carpets, opium, and figs. Ignorant of what was impending we retired to our cabins, our thoughts full of Turks and Greeks, mingled with pleasant anticipations of the enjoyment of a quiet Sunday on the morrow.

What pen can describe the horrors of that night. Shall I ever forget the feeling with which I heard the rushing, tearing, running, tumbling, jumping over our heads; the calling, bawling, swearing of Englishmen, Greeks, Turks, and Jews; the pulling of ropes, the grating and squeaking of cranes; the bumping, thumping, cracking of huge cases and boxes, as they were hauled on board, and then pushed, grazed, and thrown along the deck. But all this was as nothing compared with the heaped-up agony of listening to the loud tones of a voice which, with inexorable regularity, shouted "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, tally!" What could tally mean? At that moment philology was a dead letter with me, and I dreamt not that the German word "zahl" was the parent of this sound, and that every time tally or "count" was uttered it gave notice to one of the clerks of the ship that *ten* packages had been pitched into the hold.

The noise and confusion of all these combined sounds were scarcely earthly; indeed, a fellow-sufferer was almost justified in calling it "infernal." It was equally useless to attempt to sleep or to try to read, so I was fain to resign myself, as if under a malignant spell, to repeating slowly, after the invisible voice, "One, two, three," &c., always beginning again as soon as I came to the terrible "tally." This "double, double, toil and trouble," lasted until three in the morning, when I fell asleep and dreamt of "tally."

Very glad indeed were we in the morning to go ashore, and, during the quiet service and impressive sermon of the benevolent English chaplain, to forget the distractions of the night. All the Christian "beau monde" of Smyrna congregate every Sunday afternoon at a picturesque spot a short distance from the town, called the Caravanserai Bridge. Thither we too bent our steps. Along the margin of a clear limpid stream, beneath the shade of spreading plane trees, merry groups of Greeks and Armenians were sipping coffee and orgeat, smoking tchibouks and narghillas, or feeding the ducks that clamoured for attention. A more charming scene could hardly have been selected for an afternoon stroll. The stream was spanned by a small stone bridge. Over its single arch strings of fig-laden camels were passing, to be dis-

burdened of their loads at the "caravanserai," part of which bore the inscription of "café" over its door. Beyond the bridge and the green shades of the river valley, the purple mountains formed a lovely background. Between us and the sea rose the hill, with the town on its further side, whose summit is crowned with the extensive ruins of a castle, where St. Polycarp, the pupil of St. John the Evangelist, suffered martyrdom. Facing us, on the other side of the stream, the dark cypresses of a cemetery stretched far as the eye could see.

We remained as long as possible enjoying the beauty of the scene, and admiring the handsome Greek women, in their gold-embroidered jackets and coquettish coin-covered head-dresses, but all too soon the man-of-war's boat that brought us ashore was waiting to reconduct us to our vessel, and again for that night and another we had our fancies tortured with imaginings of Pandemonium.

At last the sound of "tally" came no more. "Not a drum was heard" falling with a thud into the well-laden hold, but a hissing and fizzing announced the getting up of steam; the swarms of black, hot-looking imps, who had, as a final operation, been putting coal on board, disappeared, and soon Smyrna and its ruins were memories of the past.

Early on the following morning, being aroused by the holystoning of the deck, I opened my eyes with a feeling of thankfulness that only the normal désagréments of shipboard would come to molest the enjoyment of our voyage on the bright blue waters of the Mediterranean. Slowly I became conscious of the moving of some object on the wall opposite to me. I stared at it. Yes, it was certainly something alive. It came to a standstill, poised itself on its tail, and curving its body advanced its full length. It was a maggot; a long, fat maggot; like those in filberts, but almost as large as a silkworm. Not far off was another, and another, and many more.

Then, oh, horror, there flashed into my recollection how one of the officers of the ship had uttered something of certain mysterious "*friends*" that might be expected to arrive with the figs, and how he had been frowned into silence, and that somehow the word "maggots" had been uttered. Then it was too true, and here they were by scores.

At breakfast there was a serio-comic expression on everybody's face. Everybody had seen "them;" but no one yet knew the extent of suffering they would occasion.

The passengers all gladly betook themselves to the deck; but when night set in we were obliged to retire to our cabins.

Then, indeed, the enemy was upon us. Like Bishop Hatto's rats—

> "Thro' the walls by thousands they pour,
> And down thro' the ceiling and up thro' the floor,
> From the right and the left, from behind and before,
> From within and without, from above and below."

By the dim light of a small lamp, so placed in a recess that it served to illumine two cabins, I wearily watched the creatures on ceiling and wall. Partially slumbering, I continued to see them, but fancy magnified them to ten times their real size, and I felt myself engaged in a Laocoon struggle for existence. When at last from fatigue I really slept I was soon awakened by something on my cheek. Instinctively my fingers sought the cause of annoyance, and with a shudder I cast from me one of the harmless but disgusting crawlers that were invading me on all sides.

The day was scarcely better than the night. A sirocco wind was blowing, the sky and sea were leaden, the heat oppressive; and, silent and dejected, everyone knew that his neighbour was dreading the hour of darkness and the return to our cabins, where, indeed, again "the worms they crept in, and the worms they crept out."

The settled melancholy and misery on every face, when once more we met at breakfast, was suddenly turned to grim laughter, as one of our party, a gallant captain, casting from him with considerable energy one of our tormentors, exclaimed, shaking himself: "They get into my brushes, into my neck, into my hair, into my whiskers, till I don't know whether I'm a man or a maggot."

It is time to inquire into the cause of this terrible invasion.

It appears that from every fig there comes forth one maggot. For the most part they make their exit during the voyage to England. But I am told the families of grocers are painfully aware that some of them remain prisoners for a longer period. Whether they increase in size after leaving their native home, or what change they undergo, I did not learn. It was a mystery how the creatures made their way out of closely packed drums, placed by hundreds in cases, stowed deep in the hold, and in the course of a few hours penetrated every nook and corner of the vessel.

We hailed with joy our arrival in the beautiful harbour of Valetta, and have never failed to caution our friends against venturing into a vessel in company with figs from Smyrna.

LADY CREIGHTON.

"YES, it's a queer-looking old place, and queer things happen there, I've heard. Things that don't seem much in this bright sunshine, but which would make a man's flesh creep if he saw and heard them over there in the dead of night."

"So!"

"So it is, sir, and people shun the place as they would the plague."

"I should like to visit it. What say you, Falkland?" And my travelling companion, Colonel Elton, turned toward me with something of the battle fire lighting his stern face.

"I'm not afraid of ghosts," I answered.

"Good! Neither am I." Then addressing the German peasant: "Can we get at the keys and secure the services of a fellow not afraid of a sighing gust of wind at midnight?"

The peasant shook his head in condemnation of the light tones, saying, as he did so:

"There's no need of keys, sir. A storm crashed one of the old doors in more than a year since, and you can go and come as you like. But if you want a good, brave fellow to guide you and stand by you through thick and thin, my brother Franz is the one for you: and he'll go backed by a hound that fears nothing human."

"Very good. We'll investigate this mystery to-night."

It was nearing dusk when we reached the irregular old structure which had attracted our attention earlier in the day. Perched high amidst rock and forest, its aspect was eminently forbidding, though the extensive grounds still gave evidence of a former care and taste which must have relieved the place of much of its sombre wildness.

As we wandered through the labyrinthine halls and rooms, other evidences of bygone luxury met our eyes in remnants of faded carpets and stray pieces of furniture, elegant enough to have graced a palace.

And these proofs of the last tenant's hasty flight were to be found in every direction. One room on the first floor had scarcely been disturbed, and in this we finally decided to bestow ourselves and the hamper, which Franz had guarded with a care that sufficiently expressed his regard for its contents. Once ablaze with firelight and candlelight the room looked a cheery place in which to await ghostly sights and sounds: and we discussed the contents of the above-mentioned hamper, trusting that our mundane comforts might not scare away the nocturnal visitants of whom we had heard.

"Franz," said the Colonel, sipping with critical taste the glass of

hock now and then raised between his eye and the light: "Franz, I think you told me the last residents here were English."

"Yes, sir. A titled lady, with her two daughters—one a child—and an army of servants. Sometimes they were seen abroad, but not often; and after a time the young lady was never seen at all."

"How long did they reside here?"

"A year, I believe, though it may have been more or less. 'Twas whispered that they ran away from what we've come to look up. And I'm thinking something took them off in a hurry, seeing how they left things behind them."

"It might seem so," returned the Colonel, glancing reflectively around him. "And ——"

"Hush!" I exclaimed, raising a warning hand. "What was that?"

There succeeded a dead silence, broken only by Nature's quiet voice out in the forest.

"Your fertile imagination, my dear fellow," at last laughed the Colonel, emptying his glass.

"Not so!" I exclaimed, as we all sprang to our feet at a louder repetition of the sound which had arrested my attention a minute before.

"'Twas a woman's voice—a voice that I know!" cried the Colonel, snatching up a candle and dashing from the room. "It came from the hall above," he shouted back, as Franz and I prepared to follow him.

"Stop!" exclaimed Franz, as we reached the door. "Look at the poor brute!" pointing to his boasted pet, crouching in the extremity of terror under a low couch by the fire. "Come, Fury! Come!" he called, but a whine was the only response, and we joined the Colonel alone. "It's nothing human, Herr Colonel, you needn't look," said Franz, solemnly, as with ashy cheeks and lips my friend darted from chamber to chamber.

As he spoke, the same heart-rending wail—sweet as mournful—echoed through the halls, and died away in some remote corner of the building.

"Higher! higher!" cried the Colonel, taking the steps two at a time. "Nina! Nina! My darling—my love! I am here, Nina!" he shouted, as the hall was reached.

Horror filled my soul. Had my friend gone mad? I looked at Franz. His eyes plainly spoke my own unexpressed fear. No voice answered the Colonel's impassioned call, yet with frantic grief he prosecuted his vain search, tearing away moth-eaten hangings, sounding the walls and beating the floors, despite our entreaties and arguments. At last we got him down to the room we had entered so incredulously a few hours previous. He sank into a seat, despairing woe marked on every lineament.

"Drink it, Herr Colonel," begged Franz, placing a brimming glass against the set lips: adding, as it was taken and drained: "Shall we leave the cursed place, sir?"

"You can leave if you wish, but I shall remain till this awful mystery is solved," muttering to himself as he again sank into that woeful silence, "There's been foul play, just as I suspected." Directly he looked up, demanding abruptly, "Franz, was the lady's name Creighton? Lady Creighton?"

Franz answered promptly: "For the life of me I couldn't tell the name. But there! do you hear that, sir?" he whispered, a grey hue settling about his mouth. "Those wheels always roll up here at midnight, and then the worst comes. Heaven help us!"

Colonel Elton had started to his feet at the first sound, and we stood breathless listeners to the rolling wheels and ringing hoofs. On they came, nearer—nearer, halting, at last, at the main entrance.

With one accord we caught up and lighted the torches lying at hand, and rushed into the hall just in time to see the great door roll open with a heavy clang, and hear the dull tramp of heavy feet and the soft rustle of silken gowns.

Close beside us the weird unseen company passed, crossing the hall to the stairs, and then up, step by step. Half paralysed I stood gazing into vacancy till Elton's smothered command aroused me.

"Come! Where they go, I go!"

And step by step we followed—up to the hall above, and then to the next. Not a word—nothing but that dull tramp and the silken rustle. It was frightful! Yet on the Colonel strode, evidently undisturbed by the terrors that shook Franz and me, a mute anguish and unfaltering purpose breathing through every glance and movement.

That some terrible grief had once swept his life, rumour had long before whispered; and I was half unconsciously speculating on it, associating the unknown past with the strange present, when a dead hush fell, ended instantly by the most appalling shriek that ever smote human ears. Just there in front of us it arose, dying away in the same prolonged, mournful wail we had first heard. A strange guttural murmur, a hurried rush of feet, a chilling blast of wind, and we stood in total darkness. As Franz clutched wildly at my arm, the Colonel's voice rang clear as a bugle in the frenzied cry:

"Nina! Poor dove, I am coming!" Then, as the truth seemed to strike him, he groaned: "Heaven help me! Am I mad? Alas! she is dead!"

Scarcely had the words left his lips when a low fiendish laugh, which each of us could have sworn was breathed close to his own ear, curdled the blood in our veins. Even the Colonel was struck with horror. A sharp ejaculation escaped his lips, and it was in hoarse,

unsteady accents that he bade us relight the torches if we had the means.

But even as he spoke a vivid, lambent light shone about us, revealing the tall, slender figure of a woman whose dark, rich beauty was set off to exquisite advantage by a heavy black satin robe, with broad, trailing, crimson cincture, and knots of the same ruddy hue burning under diamond fastenings in the jetty hair, and at the graceful throat.

She stood at the end of the hall, one slender hand gliding over the adorning frescoes; one little crimson-slippered foot pressed hard against the woodwork below. With panting breath and glittering eye Colonel Elton bent forward, watching till the seeming wall fell slowly back. Then he sprang forward, shouting fiercely:

"Lady Creighton! Demon! Fiend!"

We only saw a spasm of pain contract the beautiful features—a swift hand raised toward the door, and all was darkness. Hurriedly relighting our torches we approached the wall; but our eager hands had scarcely touched its frescoes when the low wail of a harp struck us motionless.

A few wandering chords—a few bewilderingly sweet and mournful strains, and then there rose a full, perfect melody, swelling gradually into a harmonious tempest that every instant approached nearer and nearer. Like great tidal waves it dashed up to our very feet, and then receded slowly, only to sweep back and again encompass us in a weird storm of melodious sounds. To and fro it swept—to and fro, to and fro. Franz was the first to shake off the spell that bound us.

"It comes from this wall!" he exclaimed. "Let's break it in—there's no good behind it!"

The Colonel started as if from a dream.

"Wait! We'll first search among these frescoes, pressing a foot as *she* did," he answered hoarsely.

We found the secret springs, but whether hours or minutes were consumed by the task I cannot say. As the door swung open the grand melody wavered, shivering into wild, fitful gusts that drifted sweetly away till the far distance had swallowed every sound. And in a silence almost as weird as the music, we traversed the long narrow passage and winding stairs up to three chambers with iron-bound doors and high grated windows.

All the belongings of a lady's drawing-room, bed-chamber, and boudoir were scattered through these rooms, and many tokens of a vanished presence. No dismantling hand had ever been here.

Paintings garnished the walls; richly-bound volumes lay heaped in pretty confusion on the tables; a harp, with broken, rusted strings, and a quaint chair beside it, stood just as the musician had left it. Under the lace and velvet hangings of the couch was the imprint of a human form. Even the gem-studded brush beneath the dressing

mirror spoke of some fair woman in a few long golden threads which Colonel Elton drew out with tender hand, and pressed to his lips in a passion of love and grief.

On the floor at the foot of the couch we found a tiny crystal flask suggestive of much to Colonel Elton. But save the one little word "Nina," scratched on a book, nothing more, by which to identify the life that had been, rewarded our diligent search: and lighted by the blaze of the rising sun we slowly and sadly returned to our camping-room. There Franz met with a grief. His noble pet was dead! A fact strange as indisputable.

That same day Elton and I were en route for London.

It was one of Lady Creighton's grand reunions.

Colonel Elton had paid his respects, avoiding with infinite tact and grace the cordially extended hand of his hostess. Glancing at me, he said:

"Lady Creighton, I have presumed upon my intimacy with the late Sir Robert and his lovely daughter so far as to bring an old friend. Allow me to present Major Falkland."

With shivering horror I gazed upon the woman glowing in the perfect maturity of her exquisite Italian beauty. No dress of black satin and ruddy-hued ribbons this time; but a crimson velvet robe, palpitating opals, shimmering diamonds, and laces a queen might have coveted.

Rich and mellow was Colonel Elton's voice when he spoke again.

"We are just from Germany, Lady Creighton," he said.

Lady Ceighton paled under the eye with which he transfixed her.

"We left the singing Rhine for the borders of a grand old forest—the very forest your feet once skirted."

I noted the same look of fear that swept the face under the frescoed walls. It was swift as awful, and she answered in silvery tones:

"That was not remarkable, Colonel Elton. I resided in Germany a good many months. My late husband's daughter was a great invalid, and we carried her thither when other means failed to reward our hopes. It was a sad time, for, Sir Robert being too feeble to leave England, all the responsibility fell upon me."

"You must have found it wearing," my friend returned, with the same transfixing gaze.

Lady Creighton had recovered herself somewhat, and her face betrayed nothing as she answered calmly:

"I did. But I must entreat you to excuse me—other guests I see are waiting my leisure."

"Mamma!" a sweet voice murmured at her elbow.

"Ah! Here is my daughter, Beatrice Vinci. I suppose you have

forgotten her, Colonel Elton? She was but a sprite when you last saw her!" And her dark passionate eyes burned lovingly as she presented the beautiful innocent girl at her side.

Lady Creighton moved away, doubtless hoping to avoid further conversation with the man she had just escaped.

She might as well have shunned the outstretched hand of death. Colonel Elton was her shadow. At last the rooms began to thin, but he still lingered, and Lady Creighton's face whitened and sharpened perceptibly. At last we were the only remaining guests. Self-possessed and inflexible, he spoke.

"Again presuming on old time privileges, Lady Creighton, I have remained for a quiet chat about that Germany in which we both have occasion to feel a deep interest."

I was prepared for hauteur at this point; but remorse had done its work, and she bowed shiveringly.

"Germany!" echoed the lovely Beatrice, who was hovering near her mother. "Oh, mamma! I can't hear it mentioned without a shudder. That terrible—terrible old ——"

"Beatrice, go!" interrupted Lady Creighton, almost sharply. "It grows late. These gentlemen will not detain me long, and I will soon join you."

And again the mother-love flamed in her magnificent eyes as she watched the girl's retreating form. The last floating thread of white gossamer lost to her view, she dropped into a fauteuil, motioning us to seats near her. The quiet even voice took me by surprise, and also the courage with which she dashed into an evidently-dreaded subject.

"Doubtless you have heard some of the sad details of our residence in Germany, though not the saddest. Nina's madness was a family secret, kept from all save a few faithful servants, and we naturally preferred the seclusion of a foreign country for our darling to the publicity and horrors of a madhouse. In Germany we could guard her with secret as well as loving care."

Elton's broad chest heaved at that startling mention of madness, which accounted for certain grated windows and iron-bound doors. He replied nonchalantly:

"I heard many things, Lady Creighton—some of which I will tell you. When I was first ordered off to India, I bore with me the hope of winning a sweet girl's love—and I left one in London who had both the will and the power to keep me informed of all concerning the lovely Nina—Sir Robert Creighton's one precious darling. Consequently, I learned in due time that old Sir Robert's heart and hand had been won by a peerless Italian widow—that Nina had been gifted with a mother.

"Trampling all obstacles under foot, I returned for a brief visit. I returned to find that my wild idolatry had gained the coveted reward

—Nina's love was mine. Besides that, I soon found that she was far from happy—that her father's beautiful wife was a terror and dread to her. Though sharing her fears I laughed at them—and with the glad hope of claiming, at some future day, Sir Robert's conditional promise, I departed for the post of duty.

"Then, Lady Creighton, I learned, through the same friend, that Sir Robert had made a new will—and one which was very generally esteemed the work of his peerless wife. Since I am detailing much that you already know, I may state that this will contained a clause startling in that the vast Creighton estates were entailed to Lady Creighton's little child, Beatrice Vinci, through his own daughter, Nina, in case the latter should *die unwedded.* I was disturbed at this item of English intelligence, for I said to myself, Lady Creighton may ——"

He paused, and leaned towards the superb creature whose eyes were riveted on his by a species of fascination.

"You look so white and horrified, Lady Creighton, that I fear you do not quite understand," he sneered, with a cold, deadly smile. Then he resumed, with the same smile, the same icy tones: "I said to myself, Lady Creighton may be—*may be*—TEMPTED! Don't! Pray, don't!" he laughed ruthlessly, as a low cry parted her white lips; "you mar the thread of my story, which is still unfinished.

"After a few months I heard that my Nina was in delicate health, and that the peerless Lady Creighton, who was a model step-dame in the world's eyes, had carried the poor darling to Germany, hoping something from change of scene and air. While madly chafing the bit of duty which kept me where I was, the last sad letter reached me. My friend had looked on the white, coffined face of my darling, and followed her down to the old Creighton vaults.

"He knew my fears, and voluntarily assured me that no shadow of distrust might touch Lady Creighton's immaculate name. Forcing a belief in this assurance, I remained year after year under Asian suns; for when the doting Sir Robert followed Nina, there was nothing to draw me to England. But, Lady Creighton," and his voice lost the anguished tenderness of the previous minute for the clear, quiet tones which doomed her at every word, "but, Lady Creighton, after ten years, something impelled me to a wanderer's life in Germany; and strangely enough, as I told you earlier in the evening, I tracked your footsteps."

Again he paused, leaning forward, with glittering eye and cold smile.

"My Lady Creighton, permit me to ask you a question. Were the contents of this dainty toy quite harmless?" extending a hand in which lay the crystal flask.

Lady Creighton's lips parted, but no sound drifted across their

whiteness, and with another biting laugh he resumed his former attitude of careless ease, and continued :

"The same old halls which your crimson-slippered feet once trod echoed our heavier footsteps ; the same frescoed door which your delicate fingers so often touched swung back at our louder 'Open sesame !' The harp strings were all rusted and broken, but these fine golden strands remained, deathless tokens of the fair being whose graceful head they once adorned." And he suspended the shining threads between Lady Creighton's eyes and the flaming chandelier.

"Oh, heaven ! Will you never be done ?" shudderingly gasped the stricken woman.

"Soon, very soon, my Lady Creighton. Be patient. *She* was, I know, though her wails and shrieks rung pitifully through those old rooms and halls, when we reached, with that ramping, unearthly crew, the little frescoed door. Ha ! So you know something of that spirit gang?—something of the tramping feet, the fiendish laughs, the shrieks, wails, and the harp strains ?" he queried chillingly as Lady Creighton silently raised before her bowed head two deprecating hands with the palms outward.

"Elton ! Elton ! Be merciful !" I said, grasping his arm.

He shook me off without a word or look, continuing :

"And, my Lady Creighton, can you believe it ?—we saw your very self there before that little frescoed door ! Black satin, all crimson flecked from peerless head to dainty foot, you wore. My lady, do you love the colour of your deeds ?" glancing significantly at her velvet robe.

He rose, speaking in his own calm, rich tones as he looked down upon her pallid face and shivering form.

"I have now told you something of what I have heard, and will detain you no longer. To-morrow I shall see you again. Lady Creighton must prove her innocence."

And on that morrow he did see her.

We were noiselessly conducted into a darkened chamber, and up to a couch on which lay a shrouded form. The linen was softly folded away from a face scarcely whiter than that on which we had gazed the night before, but sweet and placid as an infant's.

Lady Creighton had appealed to the highest tribunal.

ONLY A DREAM.

ROSALINE sat in a daisy dell,
  Her feet all buried in flowers,
The skies, less blue than her violet eyes,
  Bathed her in sunshine showers.
Rosaline sat with a heart all full
  Of dreams too sweet to be :
The birds sang loud on the birchen bough,
  And the world was fair to see !

Oh, if there were fays, thought Rosaline,
  And one should come floating by
In a little rose-leaf chariot
  To find where strawberries lie :
I would show her where the reddest grow,
  And then she would give to me
Something better than silver or gold,
  The blessing of wishes three !

My father and I dwell all alone,
  And his soul is full of care ;—
So first I'd wish for purest joys
  To be his life-long share.
And then I'd wish for a lover true
  To come from the world to me,—
And all the joys of the whole great Earth,
  To make up my wishes three.

The birds sang sweet on the birchen spray,—
  The bees hummed idly by,—
The wind made music in all the leaves,
  And the sunshine filled the sky.
But never a fay in a rose-leaf came,—
  And never came wishes three,—
So Rosaline put her dreams away
  And back to Life went she.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN

LOOKING IN THE DAY-BOOK.

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAUREL COTTAGE.

A COTTAGE. A roomy cottage in a small by-road amid the environs of Kennington, bordering on South Lambeth. Frost and snow on the ground outside, and biting blasts in the air: inside, sitting round the scanty fire in a bare-looking but not very small parlour, Mrs. Raynor, Edina, and the younger children, the two former busily employed making brown chenille nets for the hair.

When Edina was out one day looking about for some abode for them, this dwelling fell under her eye. It was called Laurel Cottage, as some white letters on the slate-coloured wooden gate testified: probably because a dwarf laurel-tree flourished between the palings and the window. Hanging in the window was a card, setting forth that "lodgings" were to be let: and Edina entered. Could the Raynors have gone away into the country, she would have liked to take a whole cottage to themselves: but then there would have been a difficulty about furniture. It was necessary they should stay in London, as Charles still expected to get employment there, and they must not be too far off the business parts of it, for he would have to walk to and fro night and morning. Laurel Cottage had a landlady, one Mrs. Fox, and a young boy, her son, in it. The rooms to let were four: parlour, kitchen, and two bedrooms. She asked ten shillings per week: but that the house was shabby inside and poorly furnished, she might have asked more. Edina said freely she could afford to give only eight shillings per week; and at length the bargain was struck. Edina's income was just one

pound per week, fifty-two pounds a year; eight shillings out of it for rent was a formidable sum. It left but twelve shillings for all necessaries; and poor anxious Edina, who had all the care and responsibility on her own shoulders, and felt that she had it, did not see the future very clearly before her: but at present there was nothing to be done, save bow to circumstances. So here they were in Laurel Cottage, with a dull, dreary look-out of waste ground for a view, and some stunted trees overshadowing the gate.

Alice had gone into a school as teacher. It was situated near Richmond, in Surry, and was chiefly for the reception of children whose parents were in India. She would have to stay during the holidays: but that was so much the better, as there was no place for her at home. Alfred ran on errands, and made a show of saying his lessons to his mother between whiles. Mrs. Raynor taught Kate and little Robert; Edina did the work, for they were not waited on; Charles spent his time tramping about after a situation. To eke out the narrow income, Edina had tried to get some sewing, or other work, to do; she had found out a City house that dealt largely in ladies' hair nets, and the house agreed to supply her with some to make. All their spare time she and Mrs. Raynor devoted to these nets; Charles carrying the parcels backwards and forwards. But for those nets, they must certainly have been three parts starved. With the nets they were not much better.

In some mysterious way, Edina had managed to provide them all with a change of clothing, to replace some that had been burnt. They never knew how she did it. Only Edina herself knew that. A few articles of plate that had been her father's; a few ornaments of her own: these were turned into money.

The light of the wintry afternoon was fading apace; the icicles outside were growing less clear to the eye. Little Robert, sitting on the floor, said at last that he could not see his picture-book. Mrs. Raynor, looking young still in her widow's cap, let fall the net on her lap for a minute's rest, and looked at the fire through her tears. Over and over again did these tears rise unbidden now. Edina, neat and nice-looking as ever, in her soft black dress, her brown hair moothly braided on either side her attractive face—attractive in its intelligence, its goodness—caught sight of the tears from the low chair where she sat opposite.

"Take courage, Mary," she gently said. "Things will take a turn sometime."

Mrs. Raynor caught up her work and a sob together. Katie, in a grumbling tone, said she was sure it must be tea-time. They had had only potatoes for dinner so the child was hungry. Edina rose, brought in a tray from the kitchen, which was on the same floor as the room they sat in, and began to put out the cups and saucers.

"What a time Alfred is!" cried the little girl.

Alfred came in almost as she spoke, a can of milk in his hand. By sending to a dairy half a mile off, Edina had discovered that she could get unadulterated skimmed milk cheaper than any left by the milkman; so Alfred went for it morning and night.

"It is so jolly hard!" exclaimed he, with a glowing face, alluding to the ice in the roads. "The slides are beautiful."

"Don't you get sliding when you have the milk in your hand," advised Edina. "Take off your cap and comforter, lad. The bread's ready."

She was cutting some slices of bread for him to toast. Unused to hard fare, the children could not yet get into eating dry bread with any relish: so, when there was nothing to put upon it, neither butter, nor dripping, nor treacle, Edina had the bread toasted. They eat that readily. Alfred knelt down before the parlour fire—the only fire they had—and began to toast. The kettle was singing on the hob. Edina turned the milk out of the can into a jug.

They were sitting down to the tea table when Charles came in. A glance at his weary and dispirited face told Edina that he had met with no more luck this day than usual. Putting aside a brown paper parcel that he carried, containing a fresh supply of material to be made into nets, he took his place at the table. How hungry he was, how sick from want of food, no one but himself knew. And how poor the food was that he could be supplied with!

But for the later experience of his life, Charles could not have believed that it was so difficult for a young man to obtain a situation in London. Edina, less hopeful than he, would not have believed it. Charles Raynor had not been brought up to work of any kind, had never done any; and this seemed to be one of the stumbling-blocks in the way of his success. Perhaps he looked too much of a gentleman; perhaps his refined manners and tones told against him in the eyes of men of business, testifying that he might prove unfit for work: at any rate, he had not found anyone to take him. Another impediment was this: no sooner did a situation fall vacant, than so large a number of applicants made a rush to fill it. Only one of them could be engaged: and it never happened to be Charles. Charles got a sight of the *Times* advertisements in the morning through the friendliness of a newsvendor near. He would read of a clerk being wanted in some place or another, and away he would go, at the pace of a steam-engine, to present himself. But he invariably found other applicants there before him, and as invariably he seemed not to have the slightest chance.

The disappointment was beginning to tell upon him. There were times when he felt almost mad. His conscience had been awake these last many bitter weeks, and the prolonged strain often seemed more than he could bear. Had it been only himself! Ah then, as it

seemed to Charles Raynor, all would have been easy. He could enlist for a soldier; he could hire himself to the labourers' emigration society to go out for a term of years to Australia, or to Canada; he could become a porter at a railway station. These wild thoughts (though perhaps they could not be called wild in his present circumstances) passed through his mind continually: but he had to fling them aside as visionary.

Visionary, because his object was, not to support himself alone, but his family. At least to help to support them. Charles Raynor was sensitive to a degree; and every morsel he was obliged to eat seemed as though it would choke him, because it lessened the portion of those at home. A man cannot wholly starve: but it often seemed to Charles that he really and truly would prefer to starve, and to bear the painful martyrdom of the process, rather than be a burden upon the straits of his mother and Edina; straits to which he had reduced them. Sometimes he came home by way of Frank's and took tea there—and Frank, suspecting the truth of matters, took care to add some substantial dish to the bread-and-butter. But Charles, in his delicacy of feeling, would not do this often: the house, in point of fact, was Mr. Max Brown's, not Frank's.

How utterly subdued in spirit his mother had become, Charles did not like to see and note. She kept about, but there could be no mistake that she was both sick and suffering. Oh, if he could but lift her out of this poverty to a home of ease and plenty! he would say to himself, a whole world of self-reproach at work within him: if this later year or two could be blotted out of time and memory, and they had their modest home again near Bath!

No; it might not be. The events that time brings must endure in the memory for ever; our actions in it must remain in the Book of the Recording Angel as facts of the past. The home at Bath had gone; the one at Eagles' Nest had gone; the few transient weeks of the school-home had gone: and here they were, hopeless and prospectless, eating hard fare at Laurel Cottage.

They had left off asking him now in an evening how he had fared during the day, and what his luck had been. His answer was ever the same: he had had no luck; he had done nothing: and it was given with pain so evident and intense, that they refrained in very compassion. On this evening Charles spoke himself of it; spoke to Edina. The children were in bed. Mrs. Raynor had gone, as usual, to hear them say their prayers, and had not yet come back again.

"I wonder how much longer this is to go on, Edina?"

Edina looked up from her work. "Do you mean your non-success, Charley?"

"As if I could mean anything else!" he rejoined, his tone utterly subdued. "I think of nothing but that, morning, noon, and night."

"It is a long lane that has no turning, Charles. And I don't think patience and perseverance often go unrewarded in the long run. How did you fare to-day?"

"Just as usual. Never got a single chance at all. Look here, Edina—my boots are beginning to wear out."

A rather ominous pause. Charley was stretching out his right foot.

"You have another pair, you know, Charley. These must be mended."

"But I am thinking of the time when neither pair will mend any longer. Edina, I wonder whether life is worth living for?"

"Charley, we cannot see into the future," spoke Edina, pausing for a moment in her work to look at him, a freshly-begun net in her hand. "If we could, we might foresee, even now, how very good and necessary this discipline is for us. It may be, Charley, that you needed it. Take it as a cross that has come direct from God; bear it as well as you are able; do your best in it and trust to Him. Rely upon it that, in His own good time, He will lighten it for you. And He will take care of you until it is lightened."

Charles took up the poker; recollected himself, and put it down again. Fires might not be lavishly stirred now, as they had been at Eagles' Nest. Mrs. Raynor had been obliged to make a rule that no one should touch the fire save herself and Edina.

"It is not for myself I am thus impatient to get a place," resumed Charles. "But for the rest of them, I would go to-morrow and enlist. If I could earn only twenty pounds a year to begin with, it would be a help; better than nothing."

Some two or three months back he had said, If I can only get a hundred a year. What lessons of humility does adversity teach!

"Twenty pounds a year would pay the rent," observed Edina. "I never thought it was so hard to get into something. I supposed that when young men wanted employment they had but to seek it. It does seem wrong, does it not, Charley, that an able and willing young fellow should not be able to work when he wishes?"

"My enlisting would relieve you of myself: and the thought, that it would, is often in my mind," observed Charles. "On the other hand——"

"On the other hand, you had better not think of it," she interposed firmly. "We should not like to see you in the ranks, Charley. A common soldier is——"

"Hush, Edina! Here comes mother."

But luck was dawning for Charley. Only a small slice of luck, it is true; and what, not so very long ago, he would have scorned and scoffed at. Estimating things by his present hopeless condition, it looked fair enough.

One bleak morning, a day or two after the above conversation,

Charles was slowly pacing Fleet Street, wondering where he could go next, what do. A situation, advertised in that morning's paper in flaming colours, had brought him up, post haste. As usual, it turned out a failure: to be successful, the applicant must put down fifty pounds in cash. So, that chance was gone: and there was Charles, uncertain, hungry, miserable.

"Halloa, Raynor! Is it you?"

A young stripling about his own age had run against him. At the first moment Charles did not know him, but recollection flashed on his mind. It was Peter Tanting: a lad who had been a schoolfellow of his in Somersetshire.

"I am going to get my dinner," said Tanting, after a few sentences had passed. "Will you come and take some with me?"

Too thankful for the offer, Charles followed him into the Rainbow. And over the viands they grew confidential. Tanting was in a large printing and publishing establishment close by; his brother Fred was at a solicitor's, nearly out of his articles.

"Fred's ill," observed Peter. "He thinks it must be the fogs of this precious London that affect him; and I think so too. Any way, he coughs frightfully and has had to give up for a day or two. I went to his office this morning to say he was in bed with a plaster on his chest, and a fine way they were in at hearing it; wanting him to go whether or not. One of their copying clerks has left; and they can't hear of another all in a hurry."

"I wonder whether I should suit them?" spoke Charles on the spur of the moment, a flush rising to his face and a light to his eyes.

"*You!*" cried Peter Tanting.

And then Charles, encouraged perhaps by the good cheer, told a little of his history to Tanting, and why he must get a situation of some sort that would bring in its returns. Tanting, an open-hearted, country-bred lad, became all eagerness to help him, and offered to introduce him to the solicitors' firm there and then.

"It is near the Temple; almost close by," said he: "Prestleigh and Preen. A good firm: one of the best in London. Let us go at once."

Charles accompanied him to the place. Had he been aware that this same legal firm counted Mr. George Atkinson among its clients, he might have declined to try to enter it. It used to be Callard and Prestleigh. But old Mr. Callard had died very soon after Frank held the interview with him that was told of: now it was Prestleigh and Preen.

Peter Tanting introduced Charles to the managing clerk, Mr. Stroud. Mr. Stroud, a very tall man wearing silver-rimmed spectacles, with iron grey hair and a crabbed sort of manner, put some questions to Charles, and then told him to sit down and wait. Mr. Prestleigh was in his private room; but it would not do to trouble him with these matters:

Mr. Preen was out. Peter Tanting, in his good nature, said all he could in favour of Charles, particularly that "he would be sure to do," and then went away.

Charles sat down on one of the chairs, and passed an hour gazing at the fire and listening to the scratching of pens going on at the desks. People were perpetually passing in and out: the green baize door seemed to be ever on the swing. Some brought messages; some were marshalled to Mr. Prestleigh's room. By-and-by, a youngish gentleman—thirty-five, perhaps—came in, in a warm white over-coat; and, from the attention and seriousness suddenly evinced by the clerks generally, Charles rightly guessed him to be Mr. Preen. He passed through the room without speaking, and was followed by the head clerk.

A few minutes more, and Charles was sent for to Mr. Preen's room. That gentleman—who had a great profusion of light curling hair and a pleasant face and manner—was alone, and standing with his back to the fire near his table. He asked Charles very much the same questions that Mr. Stroud had asked, and particularly what his recent occupation had been. Charles told the truth: that he had not been brought up to any occupation, but that an unfortunate reverse of family circumstances was obliging him to seek one.

"You have not been in a solicitor's office, then! Not been accustomed to the copying of deeds?" cried Mr. Preen.

Charles confessed he had not. But he took the courage to say he had no doubt he could do any copying required of him, and to beg that he might be tried.

"Is your handwriting a neat one?"

"Yes, it is," said Charles eagerly, for he was speaking only truth. "Neat and good, and very plain."

"You think you could copy quickly and correctly?"

"I am sure I could, sir. I *hope* you will try me," he added, a curious wail of entreaty in his tone, that perhaps he was himself unconscious of; but which was nevertheless apparent to Mr. Preen. "I have been seeking after something so long, day after day, week after week, that I have nearly lost heart."

Perhaps that last avowal was not the best aid to Charles's success; or would not have been with most men of business. With Mr. Preen, who was very good-natured, it told rather for than against him. The lawyer mused. They wanted a copying clerk very badly indeed; being two hands short and extremely busy: but the question was, could this young man accomplish the work? A thought struck him.

"Suppose you were to stay now and copy a page this afternoon?" suggested Mr. Preen. "You see, if you cannot do the writing, it would be useless your attempting it: but if you can, we will engage you."

"I shall only be too happy to stay this afternoon, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Preen, ringing his bell for the managing clerk. "And you shall then have an answer."

Charles was put to work by Mr. Stroud: who came and looked at him three or four times while he was doing the copying. He wrote slowly; the consequence of his super-extra care, his intensely earnest wish to succeed: but his writing was good and clear.

"I shall write quickly in a day or two, when I am used to it," he said, looking up: and there was hope in his face as well as his tone.

Mr. Preen chanced to be standing by. The writing would do, he decided; and Mr. Stroud was told to engage him. To begin with, his salary was to be fifteen shillings a week: in a short while—as soon, indeed, as his suiting them was an assured fact—it would be raised to eighteen. He was to enter on the morrow.

"Where do you live?" curtly questioned Mr. Stroud.

"Just beyond Kennington."

"Take care that you are punctual to time. Nine o'clock is the hour for the copying clerks. You are expected to be at work by that time, therefore you must get here before the clock strikes."

A very easy condition, as it seemed to Charles Raynor, in his elation of spirit. A copying clerk in a lawyer's office at fifteen or eighteen shillings a week! Had anyone told him a year back he would be capable of accepting so degrading a post—as he would then have deemed it—he had surely said the world must have turned itself upside down first. *Now* he went home with a joyous step and elated heart, hardly knowing whether he trod on his head or his heels.

And there, at Laurel Cottage, they held quite a jubilee. Fifteen shillings a week, added to the previous narrow income of twenty, seemed at the moment to look very like riches. Charles had formed all kinds of mental resolutions as he walked home: to treat his clothes tenderly lest they should get shabby; scarcely to tread on his boots that they might not wear out: and to make his daily dinner on bread and cheese, carried in his pocket from home. Ah, these resolves are good, and more than good; and generous, wholesome-hearted young fellows are proud to make them in the time of need. But in their inexperience they cannot foresee the long, wearing, depressing struggle that the years must entail, during which the efforts and the privation must be persevered in. And it is well they cannot.

It wanted a quarter to nine in the morning, when Charles entered the office, warm with the speed at which he had walked. He did all that he was put to do, and did it correctly. If Mr. Stroud did not praise, he did not grumble.

When told at one o'clock that he might go to dinner, Charles made his way to the more sheltered parts in the precincts of the Temple, and surreptitiously eat the bread and cheese that he had brought

in his pocket from home. That was eaten long and long before the time had expired when he would be expected to go in; but he did not like to appear earlier, lest some discerning clerk should decide he had not been to dinner at all. It was frightfully dull and dreary here, the bitterly cold wind whistling against him down the passages and round the corners; so he got into the open streets: they, at least, were lively with busy traversers.

"I must go and see Peter Tanting, to tell him of my success and thank him; for it is to him I owe it," thought Charles, as he quitted the office in the evening. "Let me see! The address was somewhere near Mecklenburgh Square."

Taking out a small note-case, in which the address was noted down, he halted at a street corner while he turned its leaves, and found himself in contact with William Stane. The gas in the streets and shops made it as light as mid-day: no chance had they to pretend not to see each other. A bow, exchanged coldly, and each passed on his way.

"I'll not notice him at all, should we meet again," said Charles to himself. And it might have been that Mr. Stane was saying the same thing. "Now for Doughty Street. I wonder which is the way to it?" deliberated he.

"Does Mr. Tanting live here?" inquired Charles of the young maid-servant, when he had found the right house.

"In the parlour there," replied the girl, pointing to a room on her left.

Without further ceremony, she went away, leaving him to introduce himself. A voice, that he supposed was Peter's, bade him "come in," in answer to his knock.

But he could not see Peter. A young fellow was stretched on the sofa in front of the fire. Charles rightly judged him to be the brother, Frederick Tanting. Young men are not, as a rule, very observant of one another, but Charles was struck with the appearance of the one before him. He was extremely good-looking; with fair hair, all in disorder, that shone like threads of gold in the firelight, glistening blue eyes, and a bright hectic flush on his thin cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," said Charley, as the invalid (for such he evidently was) half rose, and gazed at him. "I came to see Peter."

"Oh, aye; sit down," was the answer, given in a cordial tone, but without much breath. "I expect him in every minute."

"You are Fred," observed Charles. "I daresay he told you of meeting me on Tuesday: Charles Raynor."

"Yes, he did. Do sit down. You don't mind my lying here?"

"Is it a cold you have taken?" asked Charles, bringing forward a chair to the corner of the hearth.

"I suppose so. A fresh cold. You might have heard my breathing yesterday over the way. The doctor kept me in bed. He wanted to

keep me there also to-day; but to have to lie in that back room is so wretchedly dull. Poke up the fire, will you, please, and make a blaze."

With every word he spoke, his chest seemed to heave up and down. His voice was hollow. Now he had a fit of coughing; and the cough sounded as hollow as the voice had done.

Peter came in, welcomed Charles boisterously, and rang for tea. *That*, you may be sure, was acceptable to poor half-starved Charles. Fred, saying he was glad Charles had got the place at Prestleigh's, plunged into a few revelations touching the office politics, as well as his frequent cough and his imperfect breath allowed, with a view of putting him au courant of affairs in general in his new position.

"I shall make things pleasant for you, after I get back," said he. "We articled fellows hold ourselves somewhat aloof from the working clerks; but I shall let them know who you are, and that it is only a temporary move on your part."

Fred Tanting, warm-hearted as his brother, said this when Charles was bidding him good evening. That last look, taken when the invalid's face was raised, and the lamp shone full upon it, impressed Charles more than all. Peter went with him to the door.

"What does the doctor say about your brother?" asked Charles, as they stood on the pavement, in the cold

"Says he must take care of himself."

"Don't you think he looks very ill?"

"I don't know," replied Peter, who had been in the habit of seeing his brother daily; and therefore his looks had not particularly impressed him. "Does he?"

"Well, it strikes me so. I should say he *is* ill. Why don't you send for his mother to come up?"

"So I would, if we had a mother to send for," returned Peter. "Our mother died two years ago; and—and father has married again. We have no longer any place in the old Somersetshire homestead, Raynor. Fred and I stand by ourselves in the world."

"And without means?" cried Charles quickly; who had lately begun to refer every evil that the world contained to the lack of money.

"Oh, he allows us something. Just enough to keep us going until we shall be started on our own account. I get a hundred a year from the place I'm at. Fred gains nothing yet. He is not out of his articles."

"Well, I'll come to see him again soon," cried Charley, vaulting off. "Good night, Peter."

Was Fred indeed seriously ill? Was it going to be one of those cases, of which there are too many in London: of a poor young fellow, just entering on the hopeful threshold of life, dying away from friends,

and home, and care? Whether caused by Charles's tone or Charles's words, the shadowy thought, that it might be so, entered for the first time into the mind of Peter.

And Charles never had "things made pleasant for him," at the office, in pursuance of the friendly wish just expressed: the opportunity was not afforded. Exactly twenty days from that evening, he was invited to attend the funeral of Frederick Tanting.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JEALOUSY.

The shabby room was smartened up for the occasion. At least, as much as a poor room that holds cane-seated chairs, and a threadbare carpet not half covering the boards, can be smartened. It was Mrs. Raynor's birthday. Frank Raynor and his wife had gone to wish her many happy returns of it and to take tea; Alice was invited to come; Charles had said he would be home early. But the tea was over, and neither Charles nor Alice had put in an appearance: and the little fête, wanting them, had seemed like a failure to their mother.

Mrs. Raynor was altered: aged, spiritless, always ailing. Disappointment and poor circumstances told on her health as well as her mind. It was not for herself she grieved and suffered, but for her children. For Charles especially. His prospects had been blighted, his standing in the world utterly changed. Edina had her hands full, for Mrs. Raynor could help but very little now. What Mrs. Raynor chiefly did was to gather the young ones around her, and talk to them in her gentle voice of resignation to God's will, of patience, of that better world that they were travelling on to; where there shall be neither sickness nor sorrow, neither mortification nor suffering. The children needed such lessons: it seemed very hard to them that they should sometimes have to eat dry bread for dinner, or baked potatoes without butter. Even with all Edina's economy and with Charles's earnings, meat could not always be had: the joint must be carved sparingly, and made to last the best part of the week. They generally had a joint on a Sunday: that was as much as could be said. Clothes cost so much; and Charles, at least, had to be well-dressed. As the experienced house-wife knows, there are many items in a family's expenditure besides eating and drinking; and this applies especially to fallen gentlepeople, whose habits have been formed, and who must still in a degree keep up appearances.

If the Raynors had needed discipline, as some of the standers-by at Eagles' Nest had opined, they were certainly enjoying it in a very marked degree. Twelve months had slipped by since they took up their abode at Laurel Cottage, and there had been no change. The days and the weeks had drifted on, one day, one

week after another, in the same routine of thrift, and struggle, and privation. Charles was at Prestleigh and Preen's, working to their satisfaction, and bringing home a sovereign a week as wages: Alice was teaching still in the school at Richmond. Alfred went to a day school. Edina had sought an interview with its principal, and by dint of some magic of her own, when she told him confidentially of their misfortunes, had got him to admit the lad at almost a nominal charge. It was a weary life for them altogether no doubt, requiring constant patience and resignation; but, as Edina would cheerfully tell them, it might have been worse, and they had many things to be thankful for even yet.

October was passing, and the falling leaves strewed the ground. The afternoon was not sunny, but warm and dull: so sultry, in fact, as to suggest the idea of tempest in the air. In the patch of square garden at the back of the house they had gathered: Frank, his wife, Edina, Mrs. Raynor, and the children: some of them stood about, looking at the bed of herbs that Edina's care had planted; Mrs. Raynor was sitting on the narrow bench underneath the high window. For this garden had to be descended to by several steps; and as you stood in it the back parlour window (Mrs. Raynor's bedroom) looked perched up aloft.

"Herbs are so useful," remarked Edina, in answer to their praise of the bed. "When a stew is poor in itself, thyme or mint will give a flavour to it. Do you, remember, Frank?—poor papa liked thyme in the Irish stews."

"And very good the Irish stews used to be," said Frank. "Eve calls them ragouts. I often tell her they are not as tasty as those I had at Trennach. Remember, Daisy, it is thyme Eve's ragouts want."

Daisy, playing with little Robert, turned round with dancing eyes. She was as pretty as ever, in spite of the distasteful existence in Lambeth. And she had dressed herself for this occasion in one of her old grand silks.

"I'll try and remember, Frank," she said with a laugh. "I hope I shall not say rue instead. Whatever did you plant this great bush of rue for, Edina?"

"That bush is the landlady's; it was here when we came," replied Edina. "Mrs. Fox hangs some of it at the foot of her bed, to keep the insects off."

When Mr. Max Brown departed for the West Indies, he had thought the very utmost extent of his term of absence would be less than six months. But nearly three sixes had elapsed, and he had not returned. Apparently he liked the life there; apparently he was quite satisfied with Frank's management of his practice at home. In writing to Frank, he put the delay down to his mother. She was dying, but very slowly: that is, her complaint was one for which there is no cure: and

she wanted to keep him with her to the end. Thus Max wrote, and it was the only plea of excuse he gave for his prolonged stay. Frank could not help thinking there was some mystery about it; but he was quite content to remain at his post. It was very rare indeed that he could get an hour or two's recreation, such as this. The practice was an exacting one, and he had no assistant.

"That's the postman's knock!" cried out Kate.

The postman was not a frequent visitor at Laurel Cottage. When he did bring a letter, it was always for the Raynors: Mrs. Fox never had one at all, and never seemed to expect one. Kate ran to the door, and brought back the letter. It proved to be from Alice: stating why she was not able to come.

"Daisy, my darling, you must put your bonnet on," whispered Frank. "I want to get home before dark: I have been away now longer than I care to be."

"I should let the practice go to York for one evening," cried Alfred, who chanced to overhear the words.

"No doubt you would," laughed Frank.

"Well, Frank, I'm sure you seem to set that precious practice up above everything. One would think it was an idol, with a golden body and diamond wings."

"And so I ought to set it above everything, Master Alfred. A steward must do his duty."

Daisy went indoors unnoticed. She was feeling tired, wanted to be at home herself, and began settling on her bonnet before the glass at the window of the crowded back room. Two beds were in the chamber, besides other furniture: in one of which slept Mrs. Raynor and Kate, in the smaller one Edina. What a change it all was for them! Suddenly, while Daisy's attention was still given to her bonnet, certain words, spoken by Edina, broke upon her ear. She and Frank had sat down on the bench below the window, and were talking of Trennach. Mrs. Raynor and the children were at the end of the garden, bending together over the untidy path, as if seeking to determine what kind of coarse gravel it might be composed of.

"Do you ever hear anything of Mrs. Bell, Frank?"

"I saw her to-day," was Frank's unexpected answer. "Saw her yesterday as well."

"Where did you see her? Is she in London?" quickly repeated Edina.

"They have come to live in London. She and Rosalin

"What has caused them to do that?" continued Edina quite sharply, as if she did not altogether approve of the information. Daisy's fingers, tying her bonnet strings, could not have dropped more suddenly had they been seized with paralysis.

"I'm sure I don't know. They have come into money, through the

death of some relative at Falmouth, and thought, I believe, that they would like to live in London. Poor Mrs. Bell is worse than she used to be: the complaint, feared for her, is making progress—and must make it until the end. I am attending her."

"They live near you, then?"

"Close by."

There ensued a short silence. Edina was probably busy with thought. She spoke again.

"Is Rosaline as pretty as ever?"

"Not quite so pretty, perhaps: more beautiful."

"Ah well—I would not go there too much, Frank; illness, or no illness," cried Edina.

She spoke in a dreamy tone, as if her reflections were back in the past. In her heart she believed he must have cared more or less for Rosaline. Frank laughed slightly in answer: a laugh that had some constraint in its tone. His thoughts also had gone back; back to that fatal night at Trennach.

A sudden shout in Alfred's voice from the group in the garden. "Here it is! here it is, mamma!" Mrs. Raynor's thin gold ring had slipped off her slender finger, and they had been searching for it in the twilight.

Daisy seemed to see and hear no more until some of them came running into the bedroom, saying that Frank was waiting for her. She went out, said good night in a mechanical sort of manner, and they started, arm-in-arm, for home. The old jealousy she had once felt of Rosaline Bell had sprung up again now with tenfold force.

What a strange passion it is, this jealousy! None other, that the world knows of, is so utterly unamenable to reason. Let it once take possession of the heart of man and it fools him to the top of its bent. Light appears dark, and dark light; shadows, that no other eye can see, become rocks of substance, hard as adamant.

A short distance from the cottage, they met Charles. He was walking along at a strapping pace, and greeted them in a commotion of anger.

"It was an awful shame! Just because I wanted to get home an hour earlier than usual, it is an hour later. The office is full of work, and some of us had to stay behind and do it."

"Never mind, Charley," said Frank, with his genial smile. "Better luck next time."

"Yes, it's all very well to say next time: that will be next year, I suppose. You hardly ever come to us, you know, Frank."

"I come when I can. You must come to us instead. Spend next Sunday with us, Charley. I can't stay talking now."

"All right," said Charley, vaulting off. "Good night to you both." And neither of them had noticed that Daisy had not spoken.

Daisy was tormenting herself in a most unnecessary manner. Rosaline Bell in London! Living near to them: *close* to them, he had said. He had seen her to-day, and yesterday as well: no doubt he saw her every day. No doubt he loved her, that Rosaline!—and had thrown off all affection for herself, his wife. What a frightful thing it was!—and how far had it gone?—and what would it end in?

After this, the ordinary fashion of a jealous woman, did Mrs. Frank Raynor reason; believing her fancies to be all as true as gospel. Had some angelic messenger essayed to set her right, it would have availed naught in her present frame of mind. Jealousy is as much a disease as intermittent fever: it may have its lighter intervals, but it must run its course.

"Daisy, I think we shall have a storm!" cried Frank. "How still and hot the air is!—and look at that great black cloud coming up! We must put our best feet foremost."

Daisy silently acquiesced. And the pace they went at prevented much attempt at talking. So that he had no opportunity of noticing that she had suddenly lost her tongue.

The storm burst forth when they were within a few doors of their own home. Lightning, thunder, a heavy down-pour of rain. As they turned into the surgery, where Sam stood underneath the gas light, his arms flat on the counter, his heels kicking about underneath it, Frank caught up a note that was lying there, addressed to him.

"Who brought this note?" asked Frank as he read it.

"It was a young lady," replied Sam. "When I told her you were not at home, she asked me for a sheet o' paper and pen and ink, and writ that, and said it were to be gave to you as soon as you came in. And, please, sir, they have been round twice from Tripp's to say the baby's worse."

Frank Raynor went out again at once, in spite of the storm. His wife, who had heard what passed, turned into the parlour, her brain hard at work.

"I wonder how long this has been going on!—how long she has been coming here?" debated Mrs. Frank, her cold fingers twitching with agitation, her hot head throbbing. "*She* wrote that note—barefaced thing! When she found she could not see him, she wrote it, and left it for him: and he is gone out to see her!"

Jealousy in its way is as exciting as wine; acting very much in the same manner on any patient who is suitably primed for it. Mrs. Frank's blood was surging in her veins; her thoughts were taking a wild turn; her shaking fingers could hardly throw her bonnet off. In point of fact, the note concerned a worthy pork butcher, who feared he was sickening for some complaint; and "the young lady," his daughter, had written it, in preference to leaving a message, begging for Mr. Raynor's speedy attendance.

"Have you had your supper, Sam?" asked Mrs. Frank, from the intervening door.

"No, ma'am."

"Then go and get it."

Sam passed her on his way to the kitchen. She stepped forward to the counter, opened the day-book, and began searching for Dame Bell's address. The street door was usually kept closed now, not open as it used to be; and Daisy went to it on tip-toe, and slipped the bolt. There was nobody to hear her had she stepped ever so heavily: but we are all apt to think that secret transactions require silent movements. Taking up her place behind the counter, she turned the leaves of the book again. But, turn and look as she would, she could not see the address sought for. It is true she was looking in a desperate hurry, standing metaphorically upon spikes and ploughshares. What if Frank were to return suddenly? Or Sam from his supper?

"No, the address is not there!"—shutting the book, and pushing back the pretty hair from her beating temples. "He is too cautious to have entered it. Other patients' names are there, but Dame Bell's is not. The affair is underhanded altogether: clandestine from beginning to end."

And from that night Mrs. Frank Raynor began a course of action that she previously would have believed herself incapable of. She watched her husband. In her eagerness to discover where these Bells lived—though what service the knowledge could render her she would have been at a loss to know had she mentally asked the question—she occasionally followed him. Keeping her bonnet downstairs in readiness, she would put it on hastily when he went out, and steal after him. Three or four times a week she did this. Very contemptible indeed Daisy felt it to be, and her cheeks blazed consciously now and again: but jealousy has driven a woman to do more contemptible things than even this. But for the unsuitability of her present life, as contrasted with her previous tastes and habits and surroundings, and for its utter monotony, causing her to feel weary unto death day after day, Margaret Raynor might never so far have forgotten herself. The pursuit was quite exciting, bringing to her a kind of relief; and she resolutely drove away all inconvenient qualms of conscience.

So, there imagine that you behold them. Frank turning out at the surgery door, and hastening this way or that way, as if his feet were aided by wings: and when he is a few yards off, say just abreast of the oil and pickle shop, Daisy turns out after him. It would be generally a tedious and tormenting chase. He seemed to have so many patients to visit, here, there, and everywhere; on this side the streets and on that side, and round corners, and down courts, that his pursuer was generally baffled, lost him for good, and had to return home in despair.

Meanwhile, as time went on, Frank, unconscious of all this, was

destined to get a shock himself. One evening, when he had been called to a case of emergency near home, upon quitting the sick man's house, he entered a chemist's for the purpose of directing some article, which it was not in the province of a medical man to supply, to be sent to the sufferer. Dashing into the shop hurriedly, for his time was not his own, he was beginning to give his order.

"Will you send——"

And there his speech failed him. He stopped as suddenly and completely as though he had been shot. The young man to whom he was addressing himself, with the attentive red-brown eyes in which gleamed a smile of intelligence, and the clean white apron tied round his waist, was Blase Pellet. They looked at one another in the full glare of the gas-light.

Blase was the first to speak. "How do you do, Mr. Raynor?"

"Is it *you?*" cried Frank, recovering himself somewhat. "Are you living here?"

"Since a week past," replied Blase.

"Why have you left Trennach?"

"I came up to better myself," said Blase demurely. "One hears great things of fortunes being made in London."

"And of being lost, Pellet," rejoined Frank.

"I can go back at any time," observed Blase. "Old Float would be only too glad to have me. The young fellow he has now in my place is not *me*, Float writes me word. Float will have to attend to business a little more himself now, and I expect it will not suit him."

Without any answer to this, Frank gave the order he had gone in to give, and passed out of the shop, his mind in a very disagreeable ferment.

"He has come up here as a spy upon me; he is watching my movements," said Frank to himself. "How did he know I was here—in this part of London?" A positive conviction that it was utterly useless to try to evade Blase Pellet, had taken sudden possession of him; that he had been tracking him all along by the means of spies and emissaries, and had now come to do it in person. He felt that if he were to sail away over the seas and set up his tent in an African desert, or on the arid shores of some remote fastness of the Indian Empire, or amid the unexplored wilds of a barren prairie, he should see Blase Pellet in another tent, side by side with him, the next morning.

For the passing moment, his several pressing engagements had gone out of his head. His patients, lying in expectation of him, might lie : self was all in all. The uneasiness that had taken hold of him amounted to tribulation.

"I wonder what Dame Bell knows of this?" it suddenly occurred to him to think. And no sooner did it occur than, acting on the moment's impulse, he determined to ask her, and walked towards her lodgings at his usual quick rate. She had taken rooms in a quiet

street, where the small houses were mostly private. It was nearly a week since Frank had seen her; for her complaint was very fluctuating, and latterly she had felt better, not requiring regular attendance.

Opening the door without knocking, as was his custom, he went upstairs to the small sitting-room: this room and the bedchamber behind it comprising Mrs. Bell's apartments. She had come into a little money by the death of her sister at Falmouth, John Pellet's wife: and this, combined with her previous slight income, enabled her to live quietly. When Mrs. Pellet died, it had been suggested that Rosaline should take to her millinery business, and carry it on: but Rosaline positively declined. Neither Rosaline norher mother liked Falmouth, and they resolved to go to London. Chance alone—or at least, that apparently undirected impulse that is called chance—had caused them to fix on this particular part of London for their abode; and neither of them had the slightest idea that it was within a stone's throw of the dwelling-house of Frank Raynor. On the third day after settling in it, Rosaline and Frank had met in Mark Street: and he then learnt the news of their recent movements.

Mrs. Bell was at her old employment this evening when Frank entered—that of knitting. Lifting her eyes to see who had come in, she took the opportunity to snuff the candle by which she sat, and gazed at Frank over her spectacles.

"Hey-day!" she cried. "I thought it was Rosaline."

This was the first time Frank had seen her alone. During all his previous visits Rosaline was present. Rosaline had gone a long way that afternoon, Dame Bell proceeded to explain, as far as Oxford Street, and was not back yet. The girl seemed to have got some crotchet in her head, she added, and would not say what she went for. Frank was glad of her absence—crotchet or no crotchet; he felt an invincible distaste to name the name of Blase Pellet in her hearing.

Seen Blase Pellet to night!—what had Blase Pellet come to town for? repeated Dame Bell, in answer to Frank's introduction of the subject. "Well, sir," she added, "he tells us he was grown sick and tired of Trennach, and came up here to be near us—me and Rose. I'm sure you might have knocked me down with a feather, so surprised was I when he walked into this room last Sunday afternoon. I had dozed off in my chair here, and Rose was reading the Bible to herself, when he came in. For a minute or two I did not believe my eyes, and that's the truth. As to Rose, she turned the colour of chalk, just as if he frightened her."

"Did he know you were living here?"

"Of course he knew that, Mr. Frank. Blase, I must say, has always been as dutiful to me as if he had been my real nephew, and he often wrote to us at Falmouth. One of his letters was sent after us from Falmouth, and I wrote to tell him where we were in return."

"Did you tell him *I* was here?" questioned Frank.

"Well no, I didn't: and it's curious you should ask just that question, Mr. Frank," cried the dame. "I was just going to put in the letter that I hoped I should get better now Mr. Raynor was attending me again, but Rosaline stopped it. Mr. Raynor was nothing to Blase, she said: better not name him at all. Upon that, I asked her why she did not write the letter herself instead of me—for she never will write to him. However, you were not mentioned, sir."

"What is his object in coming to London?" repeated Frank, unable to get the one important point out of his mind.

"I'd not wonder but it's Rosaline," said Dame Bell shrewdly. "Blase has wanted to make up to her this many a day; but——"

"What an idiot the man must be!" struck in Frank.

"But she will not have anything to say to him, I was going to add," concluded Dame Bell. "Why should you call him an idiot, Mr. Frank?"

"He must be one, if he thinks he can persuade Rosaline to like him. See how ugly he is!"

"She might do worse, sir. I don't say Blase is handsome: he is not: but he is steady. If men and women were all chose by their looks, Mr. Frank, a good many would go unmarried. Blase Pellet is putting by money: he will be setting up for himself, some day; and he would make her a good husband."

"Do you tell your daughter that he would?" asked Frank.

"She'll not let me tell her, sir. I say to her sometimes that she seems frightened at hearing the young man's very name mentioned: just as though it would bring her the plague. I know what I think."

"And what is it?" asked Frank.

"Why, that Rosaline pressed upon me this settling up here in London, on purpose to put a wide distance between her and Blase. Falmouth was within his reach, and he now and then came over there. I did not suspect this till last Sunday, Mr. Frank. When tea was over, and Blase had gone, she just sat with her hands before her, looking more dead than alive. 'After all, it seems we had better have stayed at Falmouth,' said she suddenly, as if speaking to herself: and that put the thought upon me, that she had come here to be farther away from him."

Frank made no remark.

"Blase has found a place at a druggist's close by," continued Mrs. Bell: whose tongue, once set going, would not stop readily. "I don't suppose he'll like London as well as Trennach, and so I told him. *I* don't. Great noisy bustling place!"

It seemed that there was nothing more to ask or learn, and Frank bethought himself of his patients. Wishing the old dame good night

he departed. His first visit led him past the druggist's; and his glance, of its own accord, and as though fascinated, turned to the window. There, amid the glow of red and green and blue reflected from the shining globes, he saw the face of Blase Pellet; just as he had used to see it amid the glow of the same varied colours at Trennach.

CHAPTER XXX.

CROPPING UP AGAIN.

"WHY, Daisy! Out marketing, my dear?"

The salutation to Mrs. Frank Raynor came from her husband. One winter's morning, heedless of the extreme cold and the frost that made the streets partially deserted, she followed her husband when he went abroad after breakfast. The dwelling-place of Mrs. Bell and her daughter had become known to her long ago, and three parts of Daisy's days were passed in dodging her husband's footsteps, to see whether they took him to it.

That most unreasoning jealousy, which had seized upon her mind, increased in force. It was growing to be almost a disease. She felt sure, sure as if she had seen it written in letters of fire, that her husband's love had been, was, and would ever be Rosaline Bell's: that it never had been hers: and over and over again she asked herself the question—why had he married her?

It all appeared so plain to Daisy. Looking back, she could, as she fully believed, trace the past out, in regard to it, bit by bit. First of all, there was the girl's unusual and dangerous beauty; Frank Raynor's attendance at the house on the Bare Plain, under the plea of visiting the mother professionally; and the intimacy that was reported to exist between himself and Rosaline. A great deal more frequently than was good or necessary, Daisy recalled the evening when Frank had been dining at the Mount, and the conversation had turned upon the mysterious disappearance of Bell the miner and on the beauty of his daughter. Frank's signs of agitation—his emotional voice, his flushings from red to white—Daisy had then been entirely unable to comprehend: she had considered them as unaccountable as was the absence of the man of whom they were speaking—Bell. Now the reason was very apparent to her: the emotion had arisen from his love of Rosaline. She remembered, as though it had been but yesterday, the tales brought home by Tabitha, and repeated to herself—that this beautiful daughter of Bell the miner was Frank Raynor's best and only love, and that the girl worshipped the very ground he trod on. It was too late then to be swayed by the information, for the private marriage had taken place in

the church at Trennach. Daisy had hardly known whether to believe the story or not; but it had shaken her. Later, as time went on, and she and her husband moved far away from the scene of events, and Rosaline Bell seemed to have faded out of sight, almost, so far as they were concerned, out of existence, Daisy had suffered herself to forget the doubt and the jealousy. But only to call it up with tenfold force now.

And so, Mrs. Frank Raynor had amused herself, if the word may be applied to any state of mind so painful as was hers, with the pastime of watching her husband. Her steps, as of their own uncontrollable will, would take her to the quiet street in which Dame Bell lived, and she had on one or two rare occasions been rewarded by seeing him pass in or out of the house. Of course she could not be on the watch often. She dared not be. As it was, she knew that Sam's eyes had taken to open with wonder whenever she followed her husband through the surgery, and that the boy's curiosity was much exercised as to the cause. Therefore, as she was unable to make Frank's shadow frequently, and as, with all her expectation, she had been gratified so rarely by seeing what she looked for, she drew the conclusion that fortune did not favour her, and that Frank's times for going were just those when she did not happen to be out herself. An ingenious inference: as all sensible people must allow.

On one of those rare occasions, Frank came out of the house accompanied by Rosaline. They turned the opposite way to where Daisy was standing, but not before she had caught a glimpse of the beautiful face. Where were they going together, she passionately asked herself. The probability was that their coming out together was only incidental; for in a very few minutes Daisy met the girl coming back alone, carrying some rusks, which she had no doubt been out to buy, in a paper-bag. All the more essential was it, thought Daisy, after this little incident, that she should continue to look after her husband.

Daisy was becoming quite an adept at the work, and might have taken service as a lady-detective. Of course the chief care, to be exercised, was to keep herself out of her husband's view. It was not so difficult to do this as it would have been with some husbands; for Frank's time was always so precious, and his movements were in consequence obliged to be so fleet, that he went flying through the streets like a lamp-lighter, never looking to the right or the left. More than once, though, Daisy had been obliged to dart into a doorway; and it was at those times that she especially felt the humiliation of what she was doing.

But, the pitcher that goes too often to the well gets broken at last, we are told. The old proverb was to be exemplified here. On this raw, bitter January day, when of a surety nobody would venture out who could keep in, Daisy came face to face with her husband. She had tracked him to Mrs. Bell's house; fortune for once had so far

favoured her. She saw him make for the quiet street upon first leaving home, skim down it with long strides, and go straight in at the door. Her heart beat as though it would burst its bounds; her pulses coursed on with fever-heat. Nothing in the world can be so good for the doctors as indulged jealousy, for it must inevitably tend to bring on heart disease.

"I wonder how long he will stay?" thought Daisy in her raging anger. "Half an hour, maybe. Of course he does not hurry himself when he goes *there*."

Sauntering onwards with slow steps, some idea in her head of waiting to see how long he did stay, and believing herself to be perfectly safe for some long minutes to come, went Daisy. She longed to cross over the street and so get a sight of the upstairs window. But she did not dare: he might chance to look from it and see her. She knew all about the position of the Bells' rooms, having, in a careless, off-handed manner, questioned Sam, who took out Mrs. Bell's medicine. Abreast of the closed door, her face turned towards it, was Daisy, when—she found herself confronted with her husband. He had come quickly forth, without warning, not having stayed two minutes.

"Why, Daisy! Out marketing, my dear?"

The question was put laughingly. Daisy never did market: she was not much of a housekeeper yet, and the shops in Lambeth did not tempt her to begin. Eve did all that. Had she been committing a crime, she could not have felt more taken to in the unexpected surprise, or more awkward at finding an excuse.

"I—had the headache," she stammered, "and—came out for a little walk."

"But it is too cold for you, Daisy. The wind is in the north-east. I have never felt it keener."

"It won't hurt me," gasped Daisy, believing his appearance of solicitude for her was all put on. She had believed that for some time now. The kinder Frank showed himself, the more she despised him.

"You have been in there to see a patient?" questioned Daisy, hardly knowing and certainly not caring what she did say.

"Yes," replied Frank. "But she is better this morning; so I am off to others who want me worse than she does."

"Is it that Mrs. Bell from Trennach? I saw a bottle of medicine directed to her here one day. Sam was putting it into his basket."

"It is Mrs. Bell. She is worse than she used to be, for the disorder has made progress. And I fear she will get worse day by day now until the last."

"What a hypocrite he is!" thought Daisy. "I daresay there is as much the matter with her as there is with me. Of course he needs some plea of excuse—to be going there for ever to that wretched girl."

"Do you come here pretty often?" went on Daisy, coughing to conceal the spleen in her tone, which she was unable to suppress.

"I shall have to come here oftener in future, I fear," returned Frank, not directly answering the question, of which she took note. Just for these few minutes, he had slackened his pace to hers, and they were walking side by side. "I am glad she is near me: I don't think any stranger would give her the care that I shall give."

"You speak as though you were anxious for her!" resentfully cried Daisy.

"I am more than anxious. I would give half I am worth to be able to cure her."

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed Daisy. "One would think you and these people must hold some bond of union in common."

"And so we do," he answered.

Perhaps the words were spoken incautiously. Daisy, looking quietly up at him, saw that he seemed lost in thought.

"What is it?" she asked in a low tone: her breathing just then seeming to be a little difficult.

"What is what?"

"The bond of union between you and these Bells."

The plain question brought him out of his abstraction. He laughed lightly: laughed, as Daisy thought, and saw, to do away with the impression the words had made; and answered carelessly:

"The bond between me and Dame Bell? Because I knew her at Trennach, Daisy, and learnt to respect her. She nursed me through a fever once."

"Oh," said Daisy, turning her head away, indignant at what she believed was an evasion. The "bond," if there was any, existed, not between him and the mother, but between him and the daughter.

"I daresay you attend them for nothing!"

"Of course I do."

"What would Mr. Max Brown say to that?"

"What he pleased. Max Brown is not a man to object, Daisy."

"You can't tell."

"Yes, I can. If he did, I should pay him the cost of the medicines. And my time, at least, I can give."

Daisy said no more. Swelling with resentment, with jealousy, she walked by his side in silence. Frank saw her to the surgery door, and then turned back, on the run. She went in; passed Sam, who was leisurely dusting the counter, and sat down in the parlour by the fire.

Her state of mind was not to be envied. Jealousy, you know, makes the food it feeds on. Mrs. Frank Raynor was making very disagreeable food for herself, indeed. She gave the reins to her imagination, and it presented her with all kinds of suggestive horrors. The

worst was that she did not, and could not, regard these pictured fancies as possible delusions, emanating from her own brain, and to be received cautiously; but she converted them into undoubted facts. The sounds from the surgery of Sam's movements, with his answers to applicants who came in, penetrated to her, through the half open door; but, though they touched her ear in a degree, they did not touch her senses. She was as one who heard not.

Thus she sat on, until mid-day, indulging these visions to their full bent, and utterly miserable. At least, perhaps not quite utterly so; for when people are in the state of angry rage that Daisy was, they cannot feel very acutely: the brunt of distress is thrown off. A few minutes after twelve, Sam appeared. He stared to see his mistress sitting just as she had come in, not even her warm cloth cloak removed, or her bonnet untied.

"A letter for you, please, ma'am. The postman have just brought it in."

Daisy took the letter from him without a word. It proved to be from her sister Charlotte, Mrs. Townley. Mrs. Townley wrote to say that she was back again at the house in Westbourne Terrace, and would be glad to see Daisy. She, with her children, had been making a long visit of several months to her mother at the Mount, and she had but now returned. "I did intend to be back for the New Year," she wrote; "but mamma and Lydia would not hear of it. I have many things to tell you, Daisy: so come to me as soon as you get this note. If your husband will come to dinner—seven o'clock—there will be no difficulty about your getting home. Say that I shall be happy to see him."

Should she go, or should she not? Mrs. Frank Raynor was in so excited a mood as not to care very much what she did. And—if she went, and he did *not* come in the evening, he would no doubt seize on the opportunity of passing it with Rosaline Bell.

She went upstairs, took her things off, and passed into the drawing-room. The fire was burning brightly. Eve was a treasure of a servant, and attended to it carefully. Frank had given orders that a fire should be always lighted there: it was a better room for his wife than the one downstairs, and more cheerful.

Certainly more cheerful: for a greater expanse of the street could be seen, and its busy traversers. The opposite fish-shop displayed its wares more plainly to this room than to the small room below. Just now, Monsieur and Madame, the fish proprietors, were enjoying a wordy war, touching some haddock that Madame had sold under cost price. He had an oyster knife in his hand, and was laying down the law with it. She stood, in her old black bonnet, her wrists turned back on her capacious hips, and defied his anger. Daisy had the pleasure of assisting at the quarrel, as the French say; for the tones

of the disputants were pitched in a loud key, and partially reached her ears.

"What a place this is!" ejaculated Daisy. "What people! Yes, I will go to Charlotte. It is something to get away from them for a few hours, and into civilized life again."

At one o'clock, the hand-bell in the passage below was rung: the signal for dinner. Daisy went down. Frank had only just come in, and was taking off his overcoat.

"I have hardly a minute, Daisy," he said. I have not seen all my patients yet."

"Been hindering his time with Rosaline," thought Daisy. And she ungraciously took her place at table. Frank, regardless of ceremony, had already cut into the boiled leg of mutton.

"You have *generally* finished before one o'clock," she coldly remarked, as he handed her plate to her. For Eve, good servant though she was, had no idea of staying in the room during meals.

"Yes, generally. But a good many people are ill: and I was hindered this morning by attending to an accident. A little boy was run over in the street."

"Is he much hurt?"

"Not very much. I shall get him all right again."

The dinner proceeded in silence. Frank was eating too fast to have leisure for anything else, Daisy's angry spirit did not permit her to talk. As she laid down her knife and fork, Frank cut her another slice—pressed her to take it when she refused.

"I have said no once. This is my luncheon; not my dinner."

Frank Raynor had become accustomed to hear his wife speak to him in cold, resentful tones: but to-day they sounded especially cold. He had long ago put it down in his own mind to dissatisfaction at their blighted prospects: blighted, at least, in comparison to those they had so sanguinely entertained when wandering together side by side at Trennach and picturing the future. It only made him the more patient, the more tender with her.

"Mrs. Townley has written to ask me to go to her. She is back in Westbourne Terrace. She bids me say she shall be happy to see you to dinner at seven. But I suppose you will not go."

"Yes, I will go," said Frank, rapidly revolving ways and means in his mind, as regarded the exigencies of his patients. "I think I can get away for an hour or two, Daisy. Is it dress?"

"Just as you please," was the frosty answer. "Mrs. Townley says nothing about dress; she would be hardly likely to say it; but she is accustomed to proper ways."

"And how shall you go, my dear?" resumed Frank, passing over the implication with his usual sweetness of temper. "You had better have a cab."

"I intend to have one," said Daisy.

She bedecked herself in some of her smartest things, for the spirit of bravado was upon her: if her husband did not choose to dress, *she* should: and set off in a cab for Westbourne Terrace. Once there, she put away her troubles; in manner at any rate: and her sister never suspected that anything was amiss.

"I shall give you a surprise, Daisy," said Mrs. Townley to her in the course of the afternoon. "An old beau of yours is coming to dinner."

"An old beau of mine! Who is that?"

"Sir Paul Trellasis."

"What an idea!" cried Daisy. "*He* a beau of mine! Mamma must have put that into your head, Charlotte. Sir Paul came to the Mount once or twice; and as he was a bachelor, mamma at once jumped to the notion that he must come for Lydia or for me. He married Miss Beauchamp that same year, you know."

"He and his wife are in London, and I asked them to come in to dinner to-day without ceremony," resumed Mrs. Townley. "Had you taken Sir Paul, Daisy, you would not have had to be buried alive amid savages in some unknown region of London."

"No, I should not," replied the miserable wife with stern emphasis.

But another surprise was in store for Daisy. For Mrs. Townley as well. At the dusk hour, a caller was ushered into the drawing-room, and he proved to be the Reverend Mr. Backup. The curate had never quite severed his relations with Trennach. He had taken three months' duty there again this past autumn, when the Rector was once more laid aside by illness. He had then made the acquaintance of Mrs. Townley; and being now in London, had called to see her.

Mrs. Frank Raynor flushed red as a rose when he came in. The sight of him brought back to her memory the old time at Trennach, and its doings, with vivid intensity. She seemed to see herself once more standing with Frank Raynor before him at the altar, when he was making them *One* together, until death should them part. Mr. Backup had lost somewhat of his former sense of nervousness, but he was shy still, and held out his hand to Mrs. Frank Raynor with timidity.

"Ah, I remember—it was you who married Daisy," observed Mrs Townley. "My mother at first would not forgive you, I believe, Mr. Backup, until she found you did not know it was a stolen match. And how long are you in town for?"

"I am not sure," replied the parson. "I am come up to see about a curacy."

"Well, you must stay and dine with us," returned Mrs. Townley. "Nonsense! You must. I shall not let you go away. Sir

Paul and Lady Trellasis are coming—you know them—and Mr. Raynor."

The curate, perhaps lacking courage to press his refusal, stayed. In due time Sir Paul and his wife arrived; and, as the clock was striking seven, Frank. Dressed.

All this need not have been noticed, for in truth Mrs. Townley and her visitors have little to do with the story, but for something that occurred in the course of the evening. Mrs. Townley was on the music-stool, playing some scientific "morceau" that was crushingly loud and seemed interminable, with Sir Paul at her elbow turning over for her, and Daisy on the other side. Lady Trellasis, a pretty young woman with black hair, sat talking with Mr. Backup on the sofa near the fire; and Frank stood just behind them, looking at photographs. In a moment, when he was least thinking of trouble, certain words spoken by the curate caught his ear.

"Josiah Bell: that was his name. No; the particulars have never been discovered. He was found eventually, as of course you know, and buried in the churchyard at Trennach."

"The affair took great hold on my imagination," observed Lady Trellasis. "I was staying at the Mount with papa and mamma at the time the man was lost. It was a story that seemed to be surrounded with romance. They spoke, I remember, of the daughter, saying she was so beautiful. Papa thought, I recollect, that the poor man must have fallen into some pit or other: and so it proved."

"Yes," said Mr. Backup, "an unprotected pit, so deep as to have gained the appellation amid the miners of the Bottomless Shaft. The mystery of course consisted in how he got in."

"But why should that be a mystery? Did he not fall in?"

"The fact is, that some superstition attaches to the place, and not a single miner, it was said, would have willingly approached it. Bell especially would not go near it: for in that respect he was a notably weak-minded man."

"Then how did he get in?" quickly asked Lady Trellasis.

"There was a suspicion of foul play. That the man was thrown in."

"How very dreadful! Thrown in by whom?"

"I cannot tell you. A faint murmur arose later—as I was told by Mr. Pine—that some one in a superior walk of life was supposed to be implicated: some gentleman. The Rector tried to trace the report to its source, and to ascertain the name of the suspected man; but——"

"And did he?" interrupted the young lady, too eager to wait for the concluding words of Mr. Backup, who was a slow and hesitating speaker.

"No, the Rector could get at nothing: but he says that an un-

comfortable feeling, in regard to it, remains still on his mind. I should not be surprised at the affair cropping up some day again."

The "morceau" came to an end with a last overwhelming crash, and the conversation with it. Frank woke up with a start, to see a man standing before him with a tray and some teacups upon it. He took one of the cups, and drank the scalding tea at a draught, not knowing whether it was hot or cold. The words, which he could not help overhearing, had startled all feeling out of him.

"Is it not time to go Daisy?" he asked presently.

"If you think so," she coldly answered.

"Then will you get your bonnet on, my dear," he said, never noticing the ungracious nature of her reply. After those ominous words, all other words fell on his ear for the moment as though he heard them not.

Not a syllable was exchanged between them as they sat together in the cab, speeding homewards. Frank was too much absorbed in unpleasant thought to speak; Daisy was indulging in resentment. That last sentence of Mr. Backup's, "I should not be surprised at the affair cropping up again," kept surging in his mind. He asked himself whether it was spoken prophetically: and, he also asked, what, if it did crop up, would be the consequences to himself?

"He is thinking of *her*," concluded Daisy, resenting the unusual silence, although she herself by her manner invoked it. And, in good truth, so he was.

Handing Daisy out of the cab when it stopped, Frank opened the surgery door for her, and turned to pay the driver. At that self-same moment some man came strolling slowly along the pavement. He was well wrapped up in a great coat, and seemed to be walking for pleasure.

He looked at the cab, he looked at the open door of the house, he looked at Frank. Not apparently; not by dint of turning his head; but by sidelong glances directed all ways from his eyes.

"Good night, Mr. Raynor," said he at length, as he was passing.

"Good night to you," replied Frank.

And Mr. Blase Pellet sauntered on, enjoying the icicles of the winter night. Frank went in, and barred and bolted his door.

"I wish to heaven it needed nothing but bars and bolts to keep the fellow out!" spoke Frank in his dismay. "How long he will be kept out, I know not. Talk of whether the affair will crop up again!—why it is cropping up. And I have a bitter enemy in Blase Pellet."

(*To be continued.*)

ANNE.

"WHY, what's the matter with *you?*" cried the Squire.

"Matter enough," responded old Coney, who had come hobbling into our house, and sat down with a groan. "If you had the gout in your great toe, Squire, as I've got it in mine, you'd soon feel what the matter was."

"You have been grunting over that gout for days past, Coney!"

"So I have. It won't go in and it won't come out; it stops there on purpose to torment me with perpetual twinges. I have been over to Timberdale Parsonage this morning, and the walk has pretty nigh done for me."

The Squire laughed. We often did laugh at Coney's gout: which never seemed to be very bad, or to get beyond incipient "twinges."

"Better have stayed at home and nursed your gout than have pranced off to Timberdale."

"But I had to go," said the farmer. "Jacob Lewis sent for me."

Mr. Coney spoke of Parson Lewis, Rector of Timberdale. At this time the parson was on his last legs, going fast to his rest. His mother and old Coney's mother had been first cousins, which accounted for the intimacy between the parsonage and the farm. It was Eastertide, and we were spending it at Crabb Cot.

"Do you remember Thomas Lewis, the doctor?" asked old Coney.

"Remember him! aye, that I do," was the Squire's answer. "What of him?"

"He has been writing to the parson to take a house for him; he and his daughter are coming to live in old England again. Poor Lewis can't look out for one himself, so he has put it upon me. And much I can get about, with this lame foot!"

"A house at Timberdale?"

"Either in the neighbourhood of Timberdale or Crabb, Dr. Lewis writes. I saw his letter. Jacob says there's nothing vacant at Timberdale at all likely to suit. We have been thinking of that little place over here, that the people have just gone out of."

"What little place?"

"Maythorn Bank. 'Twould be quite large enough."

"And it's very pretty," added the Squire. "Thomas Lewis coming back! Wonders will never cease. How he could reconcile himself to stay away all his life, I can't tell. Johnny, lad, he will like to see you. He and your father were as thick as inkle weavers."

"Aye! Ludlow was a good friend to him while he was doing nothing," nodded old Coney. "As to his staying away, I expect he could not

afford to live in England. He has had a legacy left him now, he tells the parson.—What are you asking, Johnny?"

"Did I ever know Dr. Lewis?"

"Not you, lad. Thomas Lewis went abroad ages before you were born, or thought of. Five-and-twenty years he must have been away."

"More than that," said the Squire.

This Thomas Lewis was half-brother to the Rector of Timberdale but was not related to the Coneys. He served his time to a surgeon at Worcester. In those days young men were apprenticed to doctors just as they were to other trades. Young Lewis was steady and clever; but so weak in health that when he was qualified and ought to have set up on his own account, he could not. People were wondering what would become of him, for he had no money, when by one of those good chances that rarely fail in time of need, he got a post as travelling companion to a nobleman, rich and sickly, who was going to reside in the warmth of the south of France. They went. It brought up Thomas Lewis's health well; made quite another man of him; and when, a little later, his patron died, he found that he had taken care of his future. He had left the young surgeon a competency of two hundred a year. Mr. Lewis stayed on where he was, married a lady who had some small means, took a foreign medical degree to become Dr. Lewis, and obtained a little practice amidst the English that went to the place in winter. They had been obliged to live frugally, though an income of from two to three hundred a year goes farther over the water than it does in England: and perhaps the lack of means to travel had kept Dr. Lewis from visiting his native land. Very little had been known of him at home; the letters interchanged by him and the parson were few and far between. Now, it appeared, the doctor had again dropped into a legacy of a few hundred pounds, and was coming back with his daughter—an only child. The wife was dead.

Maythorn Bank, the pretty little place spoken of by Mr. Coney, was taken. It belonged to Sir Robert Tenby. A small, red-brick house, standing in a flower garden, with a delightful view from its windows of the charming Worcestershire scenery and the Malvern Hills in the distance. Excepting old Coney's great rambling farm homestead close by, it was the nearest house to our own. But the inside, when it came to be looked at, was found to be in a state of dilapidation, not at all fit for a gentleman's habitation. Sir Robert Tenby was applied to, and he gave directions that it should be put in order.

Before this was completed, the Rector of Timberdale died. He had been suffering from ailments and sorrow for a long while, and in the sweet spring season, the season that he had loved above all other seasons, when the May birds were singing and the May flowers were blooming, he crossed the river that divides us from the eternal shores.

Mr. Coney had to see to the new house then upon his own respon-

sibility; and when it was finished and the workmen were gone out of it, he went over to Worcester, following Dr. Lewis's request, and ordered in a sufficiency of plain furniture. By the middle of June all was ready, a maid-servant engaged, and the doctor and his daughter were at liberty to come when they pleased.

We had just got home for the Midsummer holidays when they arrived. Old Coney took me to the station to meet them; he said there might be parcels to carry. Once, a French lady had come on a visit to the farm, and she brought with her fifteen small hand packages and a bandbox.

"And these people are French too, you see, Johnny," reasoned old Coney. "Lewis can't be called anything better, and the girl was born there. Can't even speak English, perhaps. I'm sure he has had time to forget his native tongue."

But they spoke English just as readily and fluently as we did; even the young lady, Anne, had not the slightest foreign accent. And there were no small packages, nothing but three huge trunks and a sort of large reticule, which she carried herself, and would not give up to me. I liked her looks the moment I saw her. You know I always take likes or dislikes. A rather tall girl, light and graceful, with a candid face, a true and sweet voice, and large brown eyes that met mine frankly and fearlessly.

But the doctor! He was like a shadow. A tall man with stooping shoulders; handsome, thin features, hollow cheeks, and scanty hair. But every look and movement bespoke the gentleman; every tone of his low voice was full of considerate courtesy.

"What a poor weak fellow!" lamented old Coney aside to me. "It's just the Thomas Lewis of the years gone by; no health, no stamina. I'm afraid he is only come home to die."

They liked the house, and liked everything in it; and he thanked old Coney very earnestly for the trouble he had taken. I never saw a man, as I learnt later, so considerate for the feelings of others, or so grateful for any little service rendered to himself.

"It is delightful," said Miss Lewis, smiling at me. "I shall call it our little château. And those hills in the distance are the beautiful Malvern Hills that my father has so often told me of!"

"How well you speak English!" I said. "Just as we do."

"Do you suppose I could do otherwise, when my father and my mother were English? It is in truth my native tongue. I think I know England better than France, I have always heard so much of it."

"But you speak French as a native?"

"Oh, of course. German also."

"Ah, I see you are an accomplished lady, Miss Lewis."

"I am just the opposite," she said, with a laugh. "I never learnt accomplishments. I do not play; I do not sing; I do not draw; I do

not—but yes, I can dance: everybody dances in France. Ours was not a rich home, and my dear mother brought me up to be useful in it. I can make my own clothes; I can cook you an omelette, or ——"

"Anne, this is Mr. Todhetly," interrupted her father.

The Squire had come in through the open glass doors, round which the jessamine was blooming. When they had talked a bit, he took me up to Dr. Lewis.

"Has Coney told you who he is? William Ludlow's son. You remember *him*?"

"Remember William Ludlow! I must forget myself before I could forget him," was the doctor's answer, as he took both my hands in his and held me before him to look into my eyes. The tears were rising in his own.

"A pleasant face to look at," he was pleased to say. "But they did not name him William?"

"No; we call him Johnny."

"One generation passes away and another springs up in its place. How few, how few of those I knew are now left to welcome me! Even poor Jacob has not stayed."

Tears seemed to be the fashion just then. I turned away when released and saw them in Miss Lewis's eyes as she stood against the window-sill, absently playing with the white-flowered jessamine.

"When they begin to speak of those who are gone, it always puts me in mind of mamma," she said, in a whisper, as if she would apologise to me for the tears. "I can't help it."

"Is it long since you lost her?"

"Nearly two years; and home has not been the same to papa since. I do my best; but I am not my mother. I think it was that which made papa resolve to come to England when he found he could afford it. Home is but trying, you see, when the dearest one it contained has gone out of it."

It struck me that the house could not have had one dearer in it than Anne. She was years and years older than I, but I began to wish she was my sister.

And her manners to the servant were so nice—a homely country girl, named Sally, engaged by Mr. Coney. Miss Lewis told the girl that she hoped she would be happy in her new place, and that she would help her when there was much work to do. Altogether Anne Lewis was a perfect contrast to the fashionable damsels of that day, who could not make themselves out to appear too fine.

The next day was Sunday. We had just finished breakfast, and Mrs. Todhetley was nursing her toothache, when Dr. Lewis came in, looking more shadowy than ever in his black Sunday clothes, with the deep band on his hat. They were going to service at Timberdale, and he wanted me to go with them.

"Of course I have not forgotten the way to Timberdale," said he; "but there's an odd, shy feeling upon me of not liking to walk about the old place by myself. Anne is strange to it also. We shall soon get used to it, I daresay. Will you go, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir."

"Crabb church is close by, Lewis," remarked the Squire, "and it's a steaming hot day."

"But I must go to Timberdale this morning. It was poor Jacob's church, you know, for many years. And though he is no longer there, I should like to see the desk and pulpit which he filled."

"Aye, to be sure," readily acquiesced the Squire. "I'd go with you myself, Lewis, but for the heat."

Dr. Lewis said he should take the roadway, not the short cut through Crabb Ravine; it was a good round, and we had to start early. I liked Anne better than ever: no one could look nicer than she did in her trim black dress. As we walked along, Dr. Lewis frequently halted to recognise old scenes, and ask me was it this or that.

"That fine place out yonder?" he cried, stopping to point to a large stone house a mile off, partly hidden amidst its beautiful grounds. "I ought to know whose it is. Let me see!"

"It is Sir Robert Tenby's seat—Bellwood. Your landlord, sir."

"Aye, to be sure—Bellwood. In my time it was Sir George's, though."

"Sir George died five or six years ago."

"Has Sir Robert any family? He must be middle-aged now."

"I think he is forty-five, or so. He is not married."

"Does he chiefly live here?"

"About half his time; the rest he spends at his house in London. He lives very quietly. We all like Sir Robert."

We sat in the rector's pew, having it to ourselves. Herbert Tanerton did the duty, and gave a good sermon. Nobody yet was appointed to the vacant living, which was in Sir Robert Tenby's gift. Herbert, meanwhile, took charge of the parish, and many people thought he would get it—as he did, later.

The Bellwood pew faced the rector's, and Sir Robert sat in it alone. A fine-looking man, with greyish hair, and a homely face that you took to at once. He seemed to pay the greatest attention to Herbert Tanerton's sermon; possibly was deliberating whether he was worthy of the living or not. In the pew behind him sat Mrs. Macbean, an old lady who had been housekeeper at Bellwood during two generations; and the Bellwood servants sat farther down.

We were talking to Herbert Tanerton outside the church after service, when Sir Robert came up and spoke to the parson. He, Herbert, introduced Dr. Lewis to him as the late rector's brother. Sir Robert shook hands with him at once, smiled pleasantly at Anne, and nodded to me as he continued his way.

"Do you like your house?" asked Herbert.

"I shall like it by-and-by, no doubt," was the doctor's answer. "I should like it now but for the paint. The smell is dreadful."

"Oh, that will soon go off," cried Herbert.

"Yes, I hope so; or I fear it will make me ill."

In going back we took Crabb Ravine, and were at home in no time. They asked me to stay dinner, and I did so. We had a loin of lamb, and a raspberry tart, if anybody's curious to know. Dr. Lewis had taken a fancy to me: I don't know why, unless it was that he had liked my father; and I'm sure I had taken one to them. But the paint did smell badly, and that's the truth.

In all my days I don't think I ever saw a man so incapable as Dr. Lewis; so helpless as to the common affairs of life. What he would have done without Anne, I know not. He was just fit to sit down and be led like a child; to have said to him,—Come here, go there; do this, do the other. Therefore, when he asked me to run in in the morning and see if he wanted anything, I was not surprised. Anne thought he might be glad of my shoulder to lean upon when he walked about the garden.

It was past eleven when I got there, for I had to do an errand first of all for the Squire. Anne was kneeling down in the parlour amidst a lot of small cuttings of plants which she had brought from France. They lay on the carpet on pieces of paper. She wore a fresh white cotton gown, with black dots upon it, and a black bow at the throat; and she looked nicer than ever.

"Look here, Johnny; I don't know what to do. The labels have all come off, and I can't tell which is which. I suppose I did not fasten them on securely. Sit down—if you can find a chair."

The chairs and tables were strewed with books, most of them French, and other small articles, just unpacked. I did not want a chair, but knelt down beside her, asking if I could help. She said no, and that she hoped to be straight by the morrow. The doctor had stepped out, she did not know where, "to escape the smell of the paint."

I was deep in the pages of one of the books, "Les Contes de ma bonne," which Anne said was a great favourite of hers, though it was meant for children; and she had her head, as before, bent over the green sprigs and labels, when a shadow, passing the open glass doors, glanced in and halted. I supposed it must be the doctor; but it was Sir Robert Tenby. Up I started; Anne did the same quietly, and quietly invited him in.

"I walked over to see Dr. Lewis, and to ask whether the house required anything else done to it," he explained. "And I had to come early, as I am leaving the neighbourhood this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you," said Anne, "it is very kind of you to come. Will

you please to sit down, sir," hastily taking the books off a chair. "Papa is out, but I think he will not be long."

"Are you satisfied with the house?" he asked.

"Quite so, sir; and I do not think it wants anything done to it at all. I hope you will not suppose we shall keep it in this state," she added, rather anxiously. "When things are being unpacked, the rooms are sure to look untidy."

Sir Robert smiled. "You seem very notable, Miss Lewis."

"Oh, I do everything," she answered. "There is nobody else."

He had not taken the chair, but went out, saying he should probably meet Dr. Lewis—leaving a message for him, about the house, in case he did not.

"He is your great and grand man of the neighbourhood, is he not, Johnny?" said Anne, as she knelt down on the carpet again.

"Oh, he is grand enough."

"Then don't you think he is, considering that fact, very pleasant and affable? I'm sure he is as simple and free in manners and speech as we are."

"Most grand men—if they are truly great—are that. Your upstarts assume no end of airs."

"I know who will never assume airs, Johnny. He has none in him."

"Who's that?"

"Yourself."

It made me laugh. I had nothing to assume them for.

It was either that afternoon or the following one that Dr. Lewis came up to the Squire and old Coney as they were talking together in the road. He told them that he could not possibly stay in the house; he should be laid up if he did; he must go away until the smell from the paint was gone. That he was looking ill, both saw; and they believed he did not complain without cause.

The question was, where could he go? Mr. Coney hospitably offered him house-room; but the doctor, while thanking him, said the smell might last a long while, and he should prefer to be independent. He had been thinking of going with Anne to Worcester for a time. Did they know of lodgings there?

"Better go to an hotel," said the Squire. "No trouble at an hotel."

"But hotels are not always comfortable. I cannot feel at home in them," argued the poor doctor. "And they cost too much besides."

"You might chance to hit upon lodgings where you'd not be any more comfortable, Lewis. And they'd be very dull for you."

"There's Lake's boarding-house," put in old Coney, while the doctor was looking blank and helpless.

"A boarding-house? Aye, that might do, if it's not a noisy one."

'It's not noisy at all," cried the Squire. "It's uncommonly well

conducted: sometimes there are not three visitors in the house. You and Miss Lewis would be comfortable there."

And for Lake's boarding-house Dr. Lewis and Anne took their departure on the very next day. If they had but foreseen the trouble their stay at it would lead to!

II.

Lake's boarding-house stood near the cathedral. A roomy house, with rather shabby furniture in it: but in boarding-houses and lodgings people don't, as a rule, look for gilded chairs and tables. Some years before, Mrs. Lake, the wife of a professional man, and a gentlewoman, was suddenly left a widow with four infant children, boys, and nothing to keep them on. What to do she did not know. And it often puzzles me to think what such poor ladies *do* do, left in similar straits.

She had her furniture; and that was about all. Friends suggested that she should take a house in a likely situation, and try for some lady boarders; or perhaps for some of the college boys, whose homes lay at a distance. Not to make too long a story of it, it was what she did do. And she had been in the house ever since, struggling on (for these houses mostly do entail a struggle), sometimes flourishing in numbers, sometimes down in the dumps with empty rooms. But she had managed to bring the children up: the two elder ones were out in the world, the two younger were still in the college school. Mrs. Lake was a meek little woman, ever distracted with practical cares, especially as to stews and gravies: Miss Dinah Lake (her late husband's sister, and a majestic lady of middle age), who lived with her, chiefly saw to the company.

But now, would anybody believe that Dr. Lewis was "that shy," as their maid, Sally, expressed it—or perhaps you would rather call it helpless—that he begged the Squire to let me go with him to Lake's. Otherwise he should be lost, he said; and Anne, accustomed to French ways and habits, could not be of much use to him in a strange boarding-house: Johnny knew it, and would feel at home there.

When Captain Sanker and his wife (if you have not forgotten them) first came to Worcester, they stayed at Lake's while fixing on a residence, and that's how we became tolerably well acquainted with the Lakes. This year that I am now telling of was the one that preceded the accident to King Sanker.

So I went with the Lewises. It was late in the afternoon when we reached Worcester, close upon the dinner hour—which was five o'clock, and looked upon as quite a fashionable hour in those days. The dinner bell had rung, and the company had filed into dinner when we got downstairs.

But there was not much company staying in the house. Mrs. Lake

did not appear, and Miss Dinah Lake took the head of the table. It happened more often than not that Mrs. Lake was in the kitchen, superintending the dishing-up of the dinner and seeing to the ragouts and sauces; especially upon the advent of fresh inmates, when the fare would be unusually plentiful. Mrs. Lake often said she was a "born cook," which was lucky, as she could not afford to keep first-rate servants.

Miss Dinah sat at the head of the table, in a rustling green gown and primrose satin cap. Having an income of her own she could afford to dress. (Mrs. Lake's best gown was black silk, thin and scanty.) Next to Miss Dinah sat a fair, plump little woman, with round green eyes and a soft voice: at any rate, a soft way of speaking: who was introduced to us as Mrs. Captain Podd. She in turn introduced her daughters, Miss Podd and Miss Fanny Podd: both fair like their mother, and with the same kind of round green eyes. A Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell completed the company; two silent people who seemed to do nothing but eat.

Dr. Lewis sat by Mrs. Captain Podd: and very pleasant and attentive the doctor found her. He was shy as well as helpless; but she talked to him freely in her low soft voice and put him altogether at his ease. My place chanced to be next to Miss Fanny Podd's; and she began at once to put me at my ease, as her mother was putting the doctor.

"You are a stranger here, at the dinner table," observed Miss Fanny; "but we shall be good friends presently. People in this house soon become sociable."

"I am glad of that."

"I did not quite hear your name. Did you catch mine?—Fanny Podd."

"Yes. Thank you. Mine is Ludlow."

"I suppose you never were at Worcester before?"

"Oh, I know Worcester very well indeed. I live in Worcestershire."

"Why!" cried the young lady, neglecting her soup to stare at me, "we heard you had just come over from living in France. Miss Dinah said so—that old guy at the top, yonder."

"Dr. and Miss Lewis have just come from France. Not I. I know Miss Dinah Lake very well."

"Do you! Don't go and tell her I called her an old guy. Mamma wants to keep in with Miss Dinah, or she might be disagreeable. What a stupid town Worcester is!"

"Perhaps you don't know many people in it."

"We don't know anybody. We had been staying last in a garrison town. That was pleasant: so many nice officers about. You could not go to the window but there'd be some in sight. Here nobody seems to pass by but a crew of staid old parsons."

"We are near the cathedral; that's why you see so many parsons. Are you going to remain long in Worcester?"

"That's just as the fancy takes mamma. We have been here already six or seven weeks."

"Have you no settled home?"

Miss Fanny Podd pursed up her lips and shook her head. "We like change best. A settled home would be wretchedly dull. Ours was given up when papa died."

Thus she entertained me to the end of dinner. We all left the table together—wine was not in fashion at Lake's. Those who wanted any had to provide it for themselves; but the present company seemed to be satisfied with the home-brewed ale. Mrs. Captain Podd put her arm playfully into that of Dr. Lewis and said she would show him the way to the drawing-room.

And so it went on all the evening: she making herself agreeable to the doctor; Miss Podd to Anne; Fanny to me. Of course it was highly good-natured of them. Mrs. Podd discovered that the doctor liked backgammon; and she looked for a moment as cross as a wasp on finding there was no board in the house.

"Quite an omission, my dear Miss Dinah," she said, smoothing away the frown with a sweet smile. "I always thought a backgammon board was as necessary to a house as are chairs and tables."

"Mrs. Lake had a board once," said Miss Dinah; "but the boys got possession of it, and somehow it was broken. We have chess—and cribbage."

"Would you like a hand at cribbage, my dear sir?" asked Mrs. Podd of the doctor.

"Don't play it, ma'am," said he.

"Ah"—with a little drawn-out sigh. "Julia, love, would you mind singing one of your quiet songs? Or a duet. Fanny, sweetest, try a quiet duet with your sister. Go to the piano."

If they called the duet quiet, I wondered what they'd call noisy. You might have heard it over at the cathedral. Their playing and singing was of the style known as "showy." Some people admire it: but it is a good thing ear-drums are not easily cracked.

The next day Mrs. Podd made the house a present of a backgammon board: and in the evening she and Dr. Lewis sat down to play. Our number had decreased, for Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell had left; and Mrs. Lake dined with us, taking the foot of the table. Miss Dinah always, I found, kept the head.

"She is so much better calculated to preside than I am," whispered meek Mrs. Lake to me later in the evening. Happening to pass the kitchen door after dinner, I saw her in there, making the coffee. "What should I do without Dinah!"

"But need you come out to make the coffee, Mrs. Lake?"

"My dear, when I leave it to the servants, it is not drinkable. I am rather sorry Mrs. Podd makes a point of having coffee in an evening. Our general rule is, to give only tea."

"I'd not give in to Mrs. Podd."

"Well, dear, we like to be accommodating when we can. Being my cousin, she orders things more freely than our ladies usually do. Dinah calls her exacting; but ——"

"Is Mrs. Podd your cousin?" I interrupted, in surprise.

"My first cousin. Did you not know it? Her mother and my mother were sisters."

"The girls don't call you 'aunt.'"

"They do sometimes when we are alone. I suppose they think I am beneath them—keeping a boarding-house."

I had not much liked the Podds at first, and as the days went on I liked them less. They were not sincere: I was quite sure of it: Mrs. Podd especially. But the manner in which she had taken Dr. Lewis under her wing was marvellous. He began to think he could not move without her: he was as one who has found a sheet-anchor. She took all trouble of all kinds from him: her chief aim seemed to be to make his life pass pleasantly. She'd order a carriage and take him for a drive in it; she'd parade the High Street on his arm; she'd sit with him in the Green within the enclosure, though Miss Dinah told her one day she had not the right of entrance there; she'd walk him off to inspect the monuments in the cathedral, and talk with him in the cloisters of the old days when Cromwell stabled his horses there. After dinner they would play backgammon till bedtime. And with it all, she was so gay and sweet and gentle, that Dr. Lewis thought she must be a very angel come out of heaven.

"Johnny, I don't like her," said Anne to me one day. "She seems to take papa completely out of my hands. She makes him feel quite independent of me."

"You like her as well as I do, Anne."

"This morning I found him in the drawing-room; alone, for a wonder; he was gazing up in his abstracted way, as if wanting to discover what the pinnacles of the cathedral were made of, which look to be so close, you know, from the windows of that room. 'Papa, you are lonely,' I said. 'Would you like to walk out?—or what would you like to do?' 'My dear, Mrs. Podd will see to it all,' he answered; 'don't trouble yourself; I am waiting for her.' It is just as though he had no more need of me."

Anne Lewis turned away to hide her wet eyelashes. For my part, I thought the sooner Mrs. Captain Podd betook herself from Lake's boarding-house, the better. It was too much of a good thing.

That same afternoon I heard some conversation not meant for me. Behind the house was a square patch of ground called a garden, con-

taining a few trees and some sweet herbs. I was sitting on the bench underneath the high, old-fashioned dining-room windows, thinking how hot the sun was, wishing for something to do, and wondering when Dr. Lewis meant to send me home. He and Mrs. Podd were out together; Anne was in the kitchen, teaching Mrs. Lake some French cookery. Miss Dinah sat in the dining-room, in her spectacles, darning table-cloths.

"Oh, have you come in!" I suddenly heard her say, as the door opened. And it was Mrs. Podd's voice which answered.

"The sun is so very hot: poor dear Dr. Lewis felt quite ill. He is gone up to his room for half an hour to sit quietly in the shade. Where are my girls?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Miss Dinah: and it struck me that her tone of voice was rather crusty. "Mrs. Podd, I must again ask you when you will let me have some money?"

"As soon as I can," said Mrs. Podd: who seemed, by the sound, to have thrown herself upon a chair, and to be fanning her face with a rustling newspaper.

"But you have said that for some weeks. When is the 'soon' to be?"

"You know I have been disappointed in my remittances. It is really too hot for talking."

"I know that you say so. But we cannot go on without some money. The expenses of this house are heavy: how are they to be kept up if our guests don't pay us? Indeed you must let me have part of your account, if not all."

"My dear sweet creature, the house is not yours," returned Mrs. Podd, in her most honeyed accents.

"I manage it," said Miss Dinah, "and am responsible for the getting-in of the accounts. You know that our custom is to be paid weekly."

"Exactly, dear Miss Dinah. But I am sure that my cousin, Emma Lake, would not wish to inconvenience me. I am indebted to her; not to you; and I will pay her as soon as I can. My good creature, how *can* you sit stewing over that plain sewing this sultry afternoon!"

"It is my work," responded Miss Dinah. "We have not money to spend on new linen: trouble enough, it is, I can assure you, to keep the old decent."

"I should get somebody to help me. That young woman, Miss Lewis, might do it: she seems to have been used to all kinds of work."

"I wish you'd shut that door: you've left it open," retorted Miss Dinah: "I don't like sitting in a draught, though it is hot. And I beg of you to understand that we really cannot continue to keep

you and your daughters here unless you can manage to give us a little money."

By the shutting of the door and the silence that ensued, it was apparent that Mrs. Podd had departed, leaving Miss Dinah to her table-cloths. But now this had surprised me. For, to hear Mrs. Captain Podd and her daughters talk, and to see the way in which they dressed, one could not have supposed they were ever at a fault for ready cash.

At the end of ten days I went home. Dr. Lewis no longer wanted me : he had Mrs. Podd. And I think it must have been about ten days after that, that we heard the doctor and Anne were returning. The paint smelt still, but not as badly as before.

They did not come alone. Mrs. Podd and her two daughters accompanied them to spend the day. Mrs. Podd was in a ravishing new toilette ; and I hoped Lake's boarding-house had been paid.

Mrs. Podd went into raptures over Maythorn Bank, paint and all. It was the sweetest little place she had ever been in, she said, and some trifling, judicious care would convert it into a paradise.

I know who had the present care ; and that was Anne. They got over about twelve o'clock : and as soon as she had seen the ladies' things off, and they comfortably installed in the best parlour, its glass doors standing open to the fragrant flower-beds, she put on a big apron in the kitchen and helped Sally to get the dinner.

"Need you do it, Anne?" I said, running in, having seen her crumbling bread as I passed the window.

"Yes, I must, Johnny. Papa bade me have a nice dinner served to-day : and Sally is inexperienced, you know. She can roast and boil, but she knows nothing about the little dishes he likes. To tell you the truth," added Anne, glancing meaningly into my eyes for a moment, "I would rather be cooking here than talking with them there."

"Are you sorry to leave Worcester?"

"Yes, and no," she answered. "Sorry to leave Mrs. Lake and Miss Dinah, for I like them both : glad to be at home again and to have papa to myself. I shall not cry if we never see Mrs. Podd again. Perhaps I am mistaken ; and I'm sure I did not think that the judging of others uncharitably was one of my faults ; but I cannot help thinking that she has tried to estrange papa from me. I suppose it is her way : she cannot have any real wish to do it. However, she goes back to-night, and then it will be over."

"Who is at Lake's now?"

"Nobody—except the Podds. I am sorry, for I fear they have some difficulty to make both ends meet."

III.

Was it over! Anne Lewis reckoned without her host.

I was running in to Maythorn Bank the next morning, when I saw the shimmer of Anne's white garden-bonnet and her morning dress amidst the raspberry-bushes, and turned aside to greet her. She had a basin in her hand, picking the fruit, and the hot tears were running down her cheeks. Conceal her distress she could not; any attempt would have been worse than futile.

"Oh, Johnny, she is going to marry him!" cried she, with a burst of sobs.

"Going to marry him!—who? what?" I asked, taking the basin from her hand: for I declare that the truth did not strike me.

"*She* is. Mrs. Podd. She is going to marry papa."

For a moment she held her face against the apple-tree. The words confounded me. More real grief I had never seen. My heart ached for her.

"Don't think me selfish," she said, turning presently, trying to subdue the sobs and wiping the tears away. "I hope I am not that: or undutiful. It is not for myself that I grieve; indeed it is not; but for him."

I knew that.

"If I could but think it would be for his happiness! But oh, I fear it will not be. Something seems to tell me that it will not. And if—he should be—uncomfortable afterwards—miserable afterwards!—I think the distress would kill me."

"Is it *true*, Anne? How did you hear it?"

"*True!* Too true, Johnny. At breakfast this morning papa said, 'We shall be dull to-day without our friends, Anne.' I told him I hoped not, and that I would go out with him, or read to him, or do anything else he liked: and I reminded him of his small stock of choice books that he used to be so fond of. 'Yes, yes, we shall be very dull, you and I alone in this strange house,' he resumed. 'I have been thinking for some time we should be, Anne, and so I have asked that dear, kind, lively woman to come to us for good.' I did not understand him; I did not indeed, Johnny; and papa went on to explain. 'You must know that I allude to Mrs. Podd, Anne,' he said. 'When I saw her so charmed with this house yesterday, and we were talking about my future loneliness in it—and she lamented it, even to tears—one word led to another, and I felt encouraged to venture to ask her to share it and be my wife. And so, my dear, it is all settled; and I trust it will be for the happiness of us all. She is a most delightful woman, and will make the sunshine of any home.' I wish I could think so!" concluded Anne.

"No, don't take the basin," I said, as she went to do so. "I'll finish picking the raspberries. What are they for?"

"A pudding. Papa said he should like one."

"Why could not Sally pick them? Country girls are used to the sun."

"Sally is busy. Papa bade her clear out that room where our boxes were put: we shall want all the rooms now. Oh, Johnny, I wish we had not left France! Those happy days will never come again."

Was the doctor going into his dotage? The question crossed my mind. It might never have occurred to *me;* but one day at Worcester Miss Dinah had asked it in my hearing. I felt very uncomfortable, could not think of anything soothing to say to Anne, and went on picking the raspberries.

"How many do you want? Are these enough?"

"Yes," she answered, looking at the lot. "I must fill the basin up with currants."

We were bending over a currant-bush, Anne holding up a branch and I stripping it, when footsteps on the path close by made us both look up hastily. There stood Sir Robert Tenby. He stared at the distress on Anne's face, which was too palpable to be concealed, and asked without ceremony what was amiss.

It was the last feather that broke the camel's back. These words from a stranger, and his evident concern, put the finishing touch to Anne's state. She burst into more bitter tears than she had yet shed, and for a minute sobbed piteously.

"Is it any trouble that I can help you out of?" asked Sir Robert, in the kindest tones, feeling, no doubt, as sorry as he looked. "Oh, my dear young lady, don't give way like this!"

Touched by his sympathy, her heart seemed to open to him: perhaps she had need of finding consolation somewhere. Drying her tears, Anne told her story simply: commenting on it as she had commented to me.

"It is for my father's sake that I grieve, sir; that I fear. I feel sure Mrs. Podd will not make him really happy."

"Well, well, we must hope for the best," spoke Sir Robert, who looked a little astonished at hearing the nature of the grievance, and perhaps thought Anne's distress more exaggerated than it need have been. "Dr. Lewis wrote to me last night about some alteration he wants to make in the garden; I am come to speak to him of it."

"Alteration in the garden!" mechanically repeated Anne. "I have heard nothing about it."

He passed into the house to the doctor. We picked on at the currants, and then took them into the kitchen. Anne sat down on a chair to strip them from the stalks. Presently we saw Sir Robert and the doctor at one end of the garden, the latter drawing boundaries round a corner with his walking-stick.

"Oh, I know," exclaimed Anne. "Yesterday Mrs. Podd suggested that a summer-house in that spot would be a delightful improvement. But I never, never could have supposed papa meant to act upon the suggestion."

Just so. Dr. Lewis wished to erect a summer-house of wood and trellis-work, but had not liked to do it without first speaking to his landlord.

As the days went on, Anne grew to feel somewhat reassured. She was very busy, for all kinds of preparations had to be made in the house, and the wedding was to take place at once.

"I think, perhaps, I took it up in a wrong light, Johnny," she said to me one day, when I went in and found her sewing at some new curtains. "I hope I did. It must have been the suddenness of the news, I suppose, and that I was so very unprepared for it."

"How do you mean? In what wrong light?"

"Nobody seems to think ill of it, or to foresee cause for apprehension. I am so glad. I don't think I ever can much like her: but if she makes papa happy, it is all I ask."

"Who has been talking about it?"

"Herbert Tanerton, for one. He saw Mrs. Podd at Worcester last week, and thought her charming. The very woman, he said, to do papa good; lively and full of resource. So it may all be for the best."

I should as soon have expected an invitation to the moon as to the wedding. But I got it. Dr. Lewis, left to himself, was feeling helpless again, and took me with him to Worcester on the eve of the happy day. We put up at the Bell Hotel for the night; but Anne went direct to Lake's boarding-house. I ran down there in the evening.

Whether an inkling of the coming wedding had got abroad, I can't say; it was to be kept private, and had been, so far as anybody knew; but Lake's house was full, not a room to be had in it for love nor money. Anne was put in a sleeping closet two yards square.

"It is not our fault," spoke Miss Dinah, openly. "We were keeping a room for Miss Lewis; but on Monday last when a stranger came, wanting to be taken in, Mrs. Podd told us Miss Lewis was going to the hotel with her father."

"My dear love, I thought you were," chimed in Mrs. Podd, as she patted Anne on the shoulder. "I must have mis-read a passage in your dear papa's letter, and so caught up the misapprehension. Never mind: you shall dress in my room if your own's not large enough. And I am sure all you young ladies ought to be obliged to me, for the new inmate is a delightful man. My daughters find him charming."

"The room is quite large enough, thank you," replied Anne, meekly.

"Do you approve of the wedding, Miss Dinah?" I asked her later, when we were alone in the dining-room. "Do you like it?"

Miss Dinah, who was counting a heap of glasses on the sideboard that the maid had just washed and brought in, counted to the end, and then began upon the spoons.

"It is the only way we can keep our girls in check," observed she; "otherwise they'd break and lose all before them. I know how many glasses have been used at table, consequently how many go out to be washed, and the girl has to bring that same number in, or explain the reason why. As to the spoons, they get thrown away with the dishwater and sometimes into the fire. If they were silver it would be all the same."

"Do you like the match, Miss Dinah?"

"Johnny Ludlow," she said, turning round to face me, "we make a point in this house of not expressing our likes and dislikes. Our position is peculiar, you know. When people have come to years of discretion, and are of the age that Mrs. Podd is, not to speak of Dr. Lewis's, we must suppose them to be capable of judging and acting for themselves. We have not helped on the match by so much as an approving word or look: on the other hand, it has not lain in our duty or in our power to retard it."

Which was, of course, good sense. But for all her caution, I fancied she could have spoken against it, had she chosen.

A trifling incident occurred to me in going back to the Bell. Rushing round the corner into Broad Street, a tall, well-dressed man, sauntering on before me, suddenly turned on his heel, and threw away his cigar sideways. It caught the front of my shirt. I flung it off again; but not before it had burnt a small hole in the linen.

"I beg your pardon," said the smoker, in a courteous voice—and there was no mistaking him for anything but a gentleman. "I am very sorry. It was frightfully careless of me."

"Oh, it is nothing; don't think about it," I answered, making off at full speed.

St. Michael's Church stood in a nook under the cathedral walls: it is taken down now. It was there that the wedding took place. Dr. Lewis arrived at it more like a baby than a bridegroom, helpless and nervous to a painful degree. But Mrs. Podd made up for his deficiencies in her grand self-possession; her white bonnet and nodding feather seemed to fill the church. Anne wore grey silk; Julia and Fanny Podd some shining pink stuff that their petticoats could be seen through. Poor Anne's tears were dropping during the service; she kept her head bent down to hide them.

"Look up, Anne," I said from my place close to her. "Take courage."

"I can't help it, indeed, Johnny," she whispered. "I wish I could. I'm sure I'd not throw a damp on the general joy for the world."

The wedding party was a very small one indeed; just ourselves

and a stern-looking gentleman, who was said to be a lawyer-cousin of the Podds, and to come from Birmingham. All the people staying at Lake's had flocked into the church to look on.

"Pray take my arm. Allow me to lead you out. I see how deeply you are feeling this."

The ceremony seemed to be over almost as soon as it was begun—perhaps the parson, remembering the parties had both been married before, cut it short. And it was in the slight bustle consequent upon its termination that the above words, in a low, tender, and most considerate tone, broke upon my ear. Where had I heard the voice before?

Turning hastily round, I recognized the stranger of the night before. It was to Anne he had spoken, and he had already taken her upon his arm. Her head was bent still; the rebellious tears would hardly be kept back; and a sweet compassion sat on every line of his handsome features as he gazed down at her.

"Who is he?" I asked of Fanny Podd, as he walked off with Anne.

"Mr. Angerstyne—the most fascinating man I ever saw in my life. The Lakes could not have taken him in, but for mamma's inventing that little fable of Anne's going with old Lewis to the Bell. Trust her for not letting us two girls lose a chance," added free-speaking Fanny. "I may take your arm, I suppose, Johnny Ludlow."

And after a plain breakfast in private, which included only the wedding party, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis departed for Cheltenham.

The rest has to come.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

FALLING LEAVES.

Gold-tinted in the autumn sun, the autumn leaves are glowing,
Silently falling, one by one, while soft west winds are blowing;
More beautiful than in their birth, as Christians are in dying,
They gently rustle down to earth, while forest boughs are sighing.

OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

PERHAPS there never existed a time when the spirit of self-sacrifice was so little amongst us as at present. It is a virtue not understood of men: so sparely practised that it seems—like many of the good old customs and fashions of our forefathers—to be dying out. Each for himself. Thus men argue: thus they act.

In seeking a reason, it may possibly be found—if, as some think, we have reached the beginning of the end—in the fulfilment of that prophecy which says that in the last days men shall run to and fro in the earth, that knowledge shall increase, and iniquity shall abound. Or it may be the result of the progress of the age, an evil of which the food that nourishes it is daily gaining strength and growth. The world is so over-populated—at least the world of our small island—that men are jostling each other: treading upon each other's heels: wrestling for place and power; for wealth, and the grandeur wealth brings. No matter what the cost to honour and integrity; what the increasing labour of mind and body; still they wrestle.

"I must climb the social ladder. I must increase in riches and importance. My neighbour just now fills the lofty goal I covet. If I cannot attain to it unless he come down, let him fall." So man soliloquises, and proceeds to work accordingly.

Presently he gains his object. A. from his lofty height, with complacency and self-confidence, has looked down upon the struggling humanity below him. Suddenly, his very self-reliance assisting the downfall, he overbalances, and B. reigns in his stead. The latter in turn becomes self-gratulatory; he has gained his end; he cares little for the ruin he has effected. He goes forth to the high places of the world with songs triumphant.

This is no mere ideal picture. It is a truth and a fact, happening every day in a greater or less degree. All may witness for themselves who do not go through life with their eyes closed. The motto of the present hour is *Every man for himself.* It cannot be too often or too emphatically reiterated. "What can *I* do? How shall *I* increase in importance, in riches, in the honour and glory of the world? In what manner can I further *my* happiness, *my* comfort and welfare, gratify *my* senses?" The question, "What can I do to help on others in a world labouring in care and misery?" is passed over. Self-sacrifice is not to be thought of, or mentioned. "I have no time for it," says the worldly man: might he not add "no inclination"? "My whole days and nights are occupied in the furtherance of my own work, schemes, pleasures."

This is quite true. He has no time for anything but himself. He feels that we are living at a rapid rate. If he halts a moment on the way, someone else passes him swiftly, and he is lost. His place is gone. He cannot recover it. So he goes onwards in selfishness and self-absorption, till time creeps and creeps; leaving with the rich and luxurious few traces of furrows or grey hairs; until at last the eyes close in their last sleep: one more life is over, for whose soul a world would be no ransom; and the body, so restless hitherto, in the tomb has rest.

Not for this were we brought into the world. Each life has a distinct and separate purpose of its own. Each soul is created, not only to accomplish some great work—for even the humblest career earnestly fulfilled will, when the life is laid aside, leave behind it an impression of completeness—but also to help on other souls through their pilgrimage of pain and travail. This cannot be done without an amount, more or less, of self-sacrifice.

It is terrible to contemplate the dearth of this spirit, arising in part from a lack of sympathy in the human heart: a want, mark you, that may be cultivated. Take, reader, a little of your own experience. Imagine yourself in great trouble; in sore need; be it that of pity, of disburdening your soul, or the strait of poverty. How many friends or acquaintances do you possess to whom you could confidently apply with a sure feeling of trust; of being fully heard and fully answered? Five? Four? Three? No. Two? Probably not. One? Even one is doubtful. And yet, inasmuch as every soul is born into the world with the impress of the Divine Image, so no soul *need* have a heart without sympathy, and all those beauties of virtue which therefrom blossom into life.

Success itself is one of the greatest destroyers of self-sacrifice, unless the mind be noble and the heart large; just as wealth often closes its doors to the need of the world, because the thoughtless soul has come to be unable to realise in its fulness the need that exists. "I am rich, and lack naught; the distress and misery we hear of must be an idle tale; an overdrawn picture." Thus men cheat themselves. But, ye rich, believe it not. There is misery and wretchedness enough and to spare, in spite of the purple and fine linen that screen you from it; much that is in your power to lessen. But shillings must not be given for pounds, or pounds where you should give tens and hundreds. Take, for example, the collections in our London churches, on behalf of some good and pressing object, as an instance of what is, and what might be done. But the amount of charity in the world is quite apart from the question of self-sacrifice. People give out of their abundance, and much of it is terribly misapplied. There is no system in distributing.

Take the great world of commerce. How many of its members will exercise, in even a small degree, the spirit of self-sacrifice? "I am able to do this thing for A. He will be a thousand pounds the richer; I shall

be minus the five hundred pounds it would put into my pocket if I do it for myself. A. wants the thousand; the five hundred to me is nothing. But it does not enter into the principle of business, and I cannot do it. No, I cannot. If I did do it, and the world knew, it would mock me." So A. does not get his thousand pounds, and B. pockets his five hundred. A. is ruined, perhaps: possibly drags down with him a wife and children; and he never recovers his footing. "Sorry for him," says B., stifling qualms of conscience. "But I couldn't help it, clearly. Business is business."

And undoubtedly every man should do the very best he possibly can for himself in business; *but only in fairness to his duty towards his neighbour.* I would repeat this and engrave it with a pen of iron if I could: as Job did those beautiful and awful words which tell us that though worms destroy our body—for which we toil so much and sacrifice so much—yet in our flesh shall we see God. You will sometimes hear a conversation after this manner: "Why did you not do so and so? It would have been better for you." "Yes; but would it have been better for the opposite side?" "No; but you had the power in your own hands. To *you* would have been the advantage."

The reader had need to steel his heart against sophistry so worldly, argument so ungenerous. It may cost a little self-sacrifice, but if the heart becomes warped, the mind narrowed and disennobled, the conscience seared, the body had better, ere that take place, be resting quietly in its last home. We all do fade as a leaf; so much for the body and the body only; but the good that men do lives after them, and the evil is never undone. Pause and turn back ere launching out upon that wide road where return is so hard, which lays hold upon the soul with an iron grasp, to be loosened only by constant and painful struggles, ending, let us hope, in victory; but a victory gained, it may be, only through death itself.

Not to the persistently selfish will the grave be without its victory, death without its terrors and its sting. As self-sacrifice is more or less in the reach of all, so all must seek to acquire it. Look to the heart; make it green and keep it so; remember that your opportunities and your life will not last for ever; you cannot live your life twice over; it will not return and enable you to redeem the days that have been mis-spent. Now or never must be said of the opportunities of to-day; for after to-day its opportunities, taken or neglected, have passed into the womb of time and the records of eternity.

And then, to go to the reverse side of the picture, self-sacrifice brings its own reward. It gives happiness far greater than any wealth or power can bestow. In the latter case, every man in the zenith of success may lay his head upon his pillow at night, and confess that it is not without much vanity and vexation of spirit at the best; a weariness of the flesh; a thing which must pass away as a shadow. Not that

wealth and power are by any means to be despised, or not diligently sought after and received, when made subservient to the great ends of life. It is only when, as too often, they become the sole aim of heart and mind, that they bring with them ruin and destruction.

But self-sacrifice, it has been said, brings happiness. A happiness they wist not who cultivate it not. It transforms the mind; it enlarges the heart; it elevates the soul; it makes man loved; it assists him on in the right path; it helps him to that peace which passeth all understanding. Perhaps at the close his funded wealth may be somewhat less than it would have been, though this is doubtful, for (with all reverence be it uttered: and let no man allow this thought to influence him in his good works) God is no man's debtor: but how much happier and nobler will he be: how much loftier and closer to heaven his soul! And what about the great day of reckoning, when the Books are opened and each man's deeds are brought home to him?

Surely one of the great incentives to good, to glorifying God in ourselves, and in our works, is the thought of the *gratitude* we owe Him for the untold mercies and privileges we possess. Who can number his own individually?—and who can say he deserves the least of them? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He it is who gives and has power to take away. Render, O reader! unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but remember, what is far more important, to render unto God the things that are God's. What we owe to man in this world, the law makes us pay; if we do not, it is summarily enforced. God speaks to us only in the still small voice of conscience: we can pay Him or not as we please; but there will come a day of reckoning.

But the most beautiful of all self-denial, and perhaps the most difficult to practise, is that which is, or ought to be, carried on in the sacred precincts of home. At home it is very probable that, if called upon, each would be found willing to lay down his life for the other. But we are not required to perform heroic deeds: if we were, and they became common, probably that very fact would cause them to lose their influence, and we should give them up also. Life is made up of small things, and it is precisely in these that it is most difficult to be self-sacrificing—every-day matters which seem too trivial to mention; arising with the hour and dying with it, to give place to something equally unremarkable. The constant giving way in trifles and trifling inclinations; sacrificing personal wants and whims to each other. One wishes to go here, another there; one wishes to do this, another that; two wish for some new bauble, or object of necessity—the purse will admit of the gratification of one only; two are invited to some delightful country place, or the attractions of a London season—the duties of home permit only one to be absent. The key to solve these difficulties, the only spirit able to meet them, is that of self-sacrifice. This will go far to form beauty of character; to render home

that abode of harmony which all homes should be: giving up one to the other.

To those who have never tried it, cultivated or practised it, it will be a difficult matter at the outset. Nothing is so hard as for a selfish man to put away self. Self, self, self, has been so constantly the watchword and key-note of his life, that it comes uppermost in all cases; an object which pervades more or less every action; a weed choking the good seed that, let us hope, is lurking in every heart, ready to take root and spring up. It is an evil to which men are far more prone than women. Taken in the aggregate, men are essentially and exceedingly selfish; women self-sacrificing, bearing in silence, yielding. To the shame of men be it spoken. They, the stronger, should be ready to put forth all the greatness of character which by their very strength is able to shine forth in them. They should be self-forgetful, not only towards women, but towards each other; seeking each other's good, promoting each other's welfare.

I would that each man reading these words should examine his own heart. If he sees lurking there the demon of selfishness: and so spoilt and petted are many of us from youth upwards that it often lurks there unknown and unsuspected until accident or something else points out to us: if he finds lurking within him the hideous demon—one of the most hateful sins of our fallen nature—let him strive his utmost to cast it out. A great struggle will ensue; it may be a long one: but as no man ever fought in vain who fights earnestly and in the right way, so will he in the end gain the crown of victory.

No selfish man or woman was ever yet completely happy. They may cheat themselves into a belief that they are, for thought and conscience are lost in the mad whirl and rush of life. But it is a mere delusive happiness, which disappears at the moment we think to clutch it; and, like the wily ignis-fatuus, leads us an endless dance over bog and moor, to escape us at last. Then, weary and spent, we lie down: and perchance that most terrible experience, the remorse of a wasted and misapplied life, comes in and takes possession of us for ever.

The spirit of self-sacrifice is one of the great beauties of holiness. Husband yielding to wife, wife to husband; brother to brother, sister to sister; friend to friend: in great things; but in small especially. First and foremost, see that the spirit is with you at home; then carry it abroad into the world. It is a spirit that will sweeten happiness and lighten trouble; and when the soul is ready to wing its flight to its eternal home, it will have the unspeakable consolation of knowing that it has not lived to itself; that it has left the world happier and better in some degree than it found it; that it has been faithful to its earthly mission. So will it listen with unutterable bliss to the sentence: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

WITHIN THEIR GATES.

I.

THE summer sun blazes down hotly enough upon the dwellers in cities, upon the inhabitants of bare, low-lying countries. But far away in the cool regions that lie under the friendly shadow of those hills, that are so grand, and so remote and unfrequented that they hardly seem to belong to the rest of our island, all is freshness and delight. No paving-stones are here to burn the feet, no white sands to give back the fierce glare of the sun. Everywhere the green livery of nature is tinged with living gold; pleasant breezes blow on crystal streams, brown hills near at hand melt into blue ones afar off; sunny meadows skirt woods dark with shadow; and glimpses of landscape are caught that might ravish an artist, if ever artist came to these primitive solitudes. The roads which traverse this region are mostly good; and, whether flecked by the shadows of waving woods, or sweeping past orchards where the fruit-trees stand waist-deep in luxuriant grass, or in front of the old-fashioned country houses, are always pleasant highways for the traveller.

Along one of these highways, on a summer evening when the air seemed full of golden serenity, when the shadows were long and the day near its close, came a man who did not belong to any holiday class of traveller. He was a pedestrian of jaded appearance, whose dress was covered with dust, and whose lagging step proved that he had travelled long and far, and he bore in his hand a small black valise. Despite this apparent fatigue, however, and notwithstanding that he was plainly little used to hardship, he kept steadily on his way, glancing rarely to the right or left, but fixing his gaze on the road before him and plodding steadily forward. He was young; six or seven and twenty, perhaps; and he evidently belonged to the better classes, for "gentleman" was written on every look and movement. His dark face, of remarkably fine, clear outline, his lithe, tall, slender figure, his delicate hand and shapely foot, attested this fact in a manner which could not be doubted or denied. He wore no beard; and as he walked his lips were compressed rigidly, giving an expression of resolution, of defiant determination, to his face.

The sun was very nearly gone when he came to a fork in the highway where no less than three roads diverged towards widely different points. Having paused and looked vainly around for any trace of a sign-post or milestone to direct his steps, he sat down at the foot of a large tree with an air of exhaustion.

"There's nothing for it but to wait until somebody comes by who can direct me," he said to himself. "And I don't think I need push on so very exhaustingly," he added. "Surely this place is remote enough. It seems to be the fag-end of a desolate wilderness."

The tree stood on the strip of green that bordered the highway. He put his back against the trunk, and in a few minutes was asleep from sheer weariness.

An hour later he still slept—doubled up now in a curious position, with his head on the moss-cushioned root of the tree—when the stillness of the road was broken by the roll of wheels and the tramp of a horse's feet. The sounds might have been heard for a minute or two before the cause of them appeared. Then a white-faced horse came into sight, proceeding at a sedate trot and drawing a large gig, in which a middle-aged man and a young woman were seated. The former looked like a substantial farmer; no doubt was one; he had a strongly-marked, intelligent face and iron-grey hair. The girl was pretty and blooming, plain in dress, lady-like in appearance, very quiet in manner. She had untied her bonnet, so warm was the evening, and sat with an elbow on the wing of the gig, and one dark-gloved hand pressing her face thoughtfully.

In the approaching gloom of the evening neither of them observed that dark object under the tree, with his valise lying beside him; but the horse, passing close to it, chose to be startled. He shied, and darted off sideways across the road.

"Whoa!—Steady!—What is the matter with you, Billy?" cried the farmer, pulling sharply at the reins.

"Some one is lying down there," whispered the girl.

The start of the horse, the noise of the driver, conspired to awaken the sleeper. He sprang to his feet and stared at the cause of the interruption; a curious look of alarm, a quiet alertness, in every line of his face.

"Who are you? What on earth are you doing there?" growled the farmer, vexed at the contretemps. "Do you see you have frightened my horse?"

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, haughtily. "How was I to know that a sleeping man would frighten your horse? I sat down here to wait until I could meet with some one who would inform me whither these different roads lead."

"They lead to several places—none of them very near at hand," answered the farmer, still indulging in a steady stare at his interlocutor. "Night is coming on apace. May I ask how you are travelling?"

"I am travelling on foot—taking a walking tour," answered the young man, curtly.

"Where do you come from?"

"That is not of any consequence. But I like to know where I am going. Whither will *that* road take me?"

"To Craig's Point—a long way off."

"And that one?"

"Will take you to the foot of the mountains, if you've a mind to go that way."

"And this?"

"To the nearest market town. It's nine miles away."

The traveller looked down at his boots—thinking, perhaps, of the weary feet within them. Then he glanced at the fading glow on the western sky, and finally spoke abruptly:

"Is there any house of entertainment near here where I could obtain food and shelter for the night?"

"There's no regular house of entertainment nearer than the market town," answered the farmer.

The girl beside him gave his arm a slight touch at this juncture, but obtained no response of any kind. The arm remained stolidly unmoved, and the keen grey eyes remained fastened on the overcast face of the pedestrian.

"Then I must try my luck across country—that's all," said the latter, stooping for his hat. "I am obliged for your information," he added, after he had recovered this article, "and I am sorry to have detained you. I daresay I shall find some farmhouse or cottage homestead to take me in. Good evening."

"Stop a minute," said the farmer, quietly, and with the deliberate air of a man to whom time is of very small importance. "If you have no objection to mention your name and your occupation, I will offer you a night's lodging in *my* house. It is near at hand; and you might, perhaps, go farther and fare worse."

"I prefer to go farther and fare worse, then," answered the young man, haughtily. "I give no account of myself at any man's bidding; and, with thanks for your offer, I have the honour to wish you again good evening."

He bowed as he spoke—it is doubtful whether honest David Owen ever received so superb a salutation before—and turning, strode quickly down one of the roads which lay before him, his agile, nervous figure passing soon out of sight in the blue shades of the gathering twilight.

The two in the gig looked mutely after him, and a minute at least elapsed before either of them spoke. It was the girl: and her tone had an unconscious reproach in it.

"Dear father, how could you!"

"You're a fool, Mary!" returned her father—not roughly, but good-naturedly. "I knew what you meant by your pushing and pinching my arm; but I suspected him somehow."

"Suspected what?"

"I don't know. He'd not have been so peppery had all been

square with him. And did you notice how he started when he first saw us?"

"I only noticed that he awoke suddenly out of sleep, and looked very tired. I fear you hurt his feelings."

"Hurt a fiddlestick," rejoined Mr. Owen. "A straightforward man does not object to telling who he is. Hold the reins a minute, will you, Mary? See this trace!"

The trace had to be spliced together in an impromptu fashion: as there were no materials ready to hand, it took some time to do: and it was very nearly dark when Billy's owner mounted again to his place, took the reins from his daughter's hand, and started off at a rattling pace again.

"Supper must be waiting," he remarked, "and they'll all be wondering what has become of us. I hope we shall not meet that man. He took this road, and perhaps he may lie down for another nap, and make Billy break the other trace."

They drove rapidly along the darkening highway, but they saw no sign of the pedestrian with whom they had parted at the fork of the road. A dusk mantle of twilight clothed the broad fields on each side. Over the infinite depths of blue sky a few stars were sprinkled, when the farmer at last drew Billy up at his own gate. As he did so, Mary uttered a sudden, startled cry.

"Father," she exclaimed, "look! What's that?—there!—on the ground?"

"What do you mean?" testily inquired Mr. Owen, whose eyes were not so good as her own, and whose patience was beginning to give way. "Is it that confounded fellow again?"

Without answering, his daughter sprang lightly out of the gig, and ran forward to the gate, where on the ground—almost under Billy's feet, and immediately in front of Billy's path—lay prone and senseless the figure of the stranger with whom they had parted half an hour before.

"It is the same man," she said, as her father came more deliberately to her side; "and I—I think he's dead."

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Owen, feeling the warm skin and the feebly-beating pulse. "But he seems to be in a bad way, from some cause or other—I hope it's not whisky. Run to the house, Mary, and send somebody here. Whoever he is, he is lying helpless at our own gate, and we shall have to take him in *now*."

Mary obeyed his order literally. She ran with the fleetness of a deer to the dwelling-house. It was a low, substantial tenement, surrounded by its farm-buildings, and looking on in front to a good garden and grass-plat, which was shut in by trees. Any dwelling-place more solitary than this could not well be found, for not another of any descrip-

was within sight.

One or two of the out-door men stood about the premises, waiting probably for the arrival of the master. Miss Owen said a hasty word of explanation, and sent them running to the gate. This was barely done, when her young brothers and sisters came trooping out.

"Is that you, Mary? How late you are! Where's father? Supper has been waiting ever so long."

Amidst the children had come forth a young man of four or five and twenty, one Alfred Hale. Mary, out of courtesy to him, addressed her explanation to himself, rather than to the children.

"Perhaps you can help to bring him in, Mr. Hale," she said, "if you would not mind the trouble. One of the men will have to take Billy, and my father is very tired."

"Certainly," he answered, with alacrity. "Who is he? Do you know him?"

"Not at all: he's a stranger. We saw him lying at the bend, as I tell you; and then found him here at the gate, insensible. I thought he looked very fatigued."

Mr. Hale strode off in the direction of the gate. The two sons of the family, David and Tom, well-grown boys, started off in his wake. The three girls plied their sister with all manner of questions.

"Don't ask me now, Lucy," she said. "Where's Nanny? We must see to the best bedroom."

"The best bedroom!" echoed Lucy. "Is he a gentleman, then?"

"Oh, a gentleman, certainly."

The stranger revived, and was assisted to the house by Mr. Hale and the farmer. Whisky had nothing to do with his condition—as the latter found, to his relief. He had fainted from sheer exhaustion. Some refreshment was given to him, but he was still so faint and weak that the farmer, all hospitality now, insisted upon his going to bed at once.

"Is a room ready for him, Mary?" he asked.

"Yes, father, quite."

Mr. Hale was ready to help him up the stairs. The stranger held out his hand to his host.

"I thank you from my heart," he said. "You seemed to take a dislike to me, I thought; and therefore I feel the more indebted to your goodness and hospitality."

"Dislike! Not a bit of it," cried the farmer, heartily. "Tut, man, go to bed and rest."

Presently Mr. Hale came down again, and took his place at the supper-table. He was an out-of-door master at a neighbouring school, the school that had the honour of educating the young Owens. When he came first to the district, some six months ago, he was at an utter fault for some suitable place to board at. No family was found willing to take a gentleman in: in fact, no family lived within reasonable dis-

tance: and in sheer distress he applied to David Owen. Mr. Owen demurred at first: he had never been accustomed to anything of the kind. But upon its being suggested to him by the master of the school (who had no accommodation in his own house) that it might prove of benefit to David and Tom to have their tutor in the house, and to be accompanied by him often to and fro, Mr. Owen consented. This young man, Alfred Hale, hoped to be a clergyman some time, but he had to work his way on to it. So here he was, living at the farmer's house, almost as one of themselves.

The boys did not care for him: they thought him sullen. Certainly he was a very silent, self-contained man. Mary Owen hardly knew whether she liked him or not. She did *not* like him in the way he would have wished: for it was very evident, at any rate to her, that he had learnt to love her deeply. She was not sure in her own mind that she never should love him: but she never, by word or look, gave him the slightest encouragement to think so.

II.

The stranger whom David Owen thus received within his doors was not destined to leave them for some time. Fatigue and unwonted exposure had done their work. He tossed through the night aching in every limb and burning with fever, and when morning came was in a condition which made movement impossible. It was evident that he had caught a chill, probably from sleeping on the grass, damp with the night-dews. Ill though he was, however, he was able to prescribe for himself, to refuse peremptorily to see a doctor, and to assure his host —who came in and looked gravely at him—that he should "pull through" in a few days.

These few days proved of considerable duration. He was at no time in a critical condition, but he was certainly very ill, and only the native strength of a good constitution, and perhaps the good nursing and the pure air of the rural spot, brought him safely through the fever which attacked the foundation of life. He gave Mary Owen and Nanny, the old servant, plenty of occupation; and the former plenty of food for thought, too, during the golden days and balmy nights of the two or three weeks following his arrival. Who was he? —what was he?—where did he come from? On all these points—even in the delirium which sometimes attacked him—he was mute, and left his entertainers room for the widest possible conjecture. Sometimes, when he was not himself, he would seem to be adding up incessant columns of figures; and would mutter about bonds, stocks, securities; so that Mary fancied he must be a banker.

But his own words, when he grew better, did not bear this idea out. One day when Mr. Owen was sitting in his room he told him his name

was Shepard, and that he was travelling through the principality as agent to a mining company.

But to this statement Mr. Owen shook his head when alone with his daughter. "He's a stranger within my gates, and I'll say nothing against him where curious ears can hear, or tattling tongues get hold of it," he said, "but I don't mind telling *you*, Mary, that I do not believe a word of the account he gives of himself."

"But what do you believe, father?" she answered. "What is it that you think?"

"I don't know, lass. An instinct lies in my mind that he is not what he makes himself out to be. How is it he never writes to anybody?—and has no letters?"

"He has been too ill to write."

"Then he might dictate to us. Anyway, he is my guest, and as such shall be regarded; and I don't know that anything else matters to us. But as to his being a common agent, travelling about to visit mines, he is nothing of the kind, rely upon it; he is too much of a gentleman for that."

Mr. Shepard gave no fuller account of himself. He only lay quiet and motionless as the fever left him, and the languor of convalescence began to come on—watching Mary with a steady, intent gaze which made her feel uncomfortable, as she brought him his food, or moved about his room. She had been his chief nurse throughout his illness, for her three younger sisters were heedless children, and her mother was dead; and old Nanny had her house-work to do: but it was only now that he began to appreciate what an excellent nurse she was—so light of step, so deft of touch, so low of voice, so fair and pleasant to look upon.

"How can I thank you enough for all that you have done for me?" he said one day, when she sat by him as he eat his dinner. "You have been—you *are*—so very kind to me."

"You have nothing to thank me for," answered she, simply. "You are sick and a stranger—it would be strange if we did not do all that we could for you. Is your dinner what you like? Can I get anything else for you?"

"It is excellent," said he, regarding it with the hungry eyes of a convalescent. "But there is something else you can do for me, if you choose. You can come and sit with me a little while this afternoon. I am horribly lonesome, and these newspapers"—pointing to some for which he had asked—"are worse than my own society."

So, later in the afternoon—when she had finished her work, and arrayed herself in a fresh, clean muslin—Mary, with her sewing in her hand, presented herself in the invalid's room, and sat down to make herself entertaining. This was not very difficult to accomplish, since she had only to answer the questions which her patient immediately

proceeded to ask. These related chiefly to her family—her father, brothers, sisters, herself—but when his curiosity was satisfied on these points, Mr. Shepard went on to other subjects. He asked if they had many neighbours, and if these neighbours often visited them, and whether the district, amid which chance had thrown him, was not exceptionally lonely and solitary. Finally he inquired if the young man he had seen on the night of his arrival was one of the family.

Then the glow on Mary's cheek deepened a little, and the white lids drooped over her blue eyes. "No," she answered. "That was Mr. Hale. He was a tutor at the school, and had been admitted, as a favour, to reside with them, but he was not one of the family."

"You mean he is not related to you," said the gentleman with a smile; "but perhaps he belongs to you in a different manner."

"He does not belong to us in any manner," said Mary, blushing more vividly now. Of course she understood what he meant; but it was quite true that the good-looking young usher did *not* belong to her —though it was equally true that he would have very much liked to do so.

"He must have very bad taste, then," said her companion. "If you are as kind a mistress as you are a nurse, *I* should ask nothing better than to belong to you."

The girl lifted her long lashes and shot a glance at him. Badinage was a thing unknown in that rustic district, and compliments were indissolubly connected with giggling and blushing and absurdity unutterable. Being sensible, and not altogether uncultivated, Miss Owen had never liked them, and now she wondered what this stranger meant. Was he in earnest, or was he laughing at her?

The stranger in question thought, meanwhile, that she made as pretty a picture as he had seen in many a day—the deep green foliage touched with gold, outside the window by which she sat, forming a background for her graceful head with its wealth of soft brown hair, her delicate, decided profile, and lovely complexion. He was in a mood to enjoy any slight passing pleasure; and it was more than a slight pleasure to watch Mary just then.

"Why do you look at me so?" he asked. "Have I said anything that you do not like? Is there any harm in thinking that if I were Mr. Hale I should *certainly* belong to you?"

"Yes, there is harm," said Mary, but she could not help dimpling into a smile; "because you don't mean it."

"Don't I?" said he, with a faint laugh. "Perhaps I know more about that than you do. But indeed, there is no need to say 'if I were Mr. Hale,' for I *do* belong to you by the right of treasure trove—that is, if you care to own me. When a man finds a piece of stray property in the public road, it belongs to him; and you found me there."

"But the property does not belong to him if somebody else comes forward and proves that it is theirs," said Mary, demurely. "Somebody else may claim you. Perhaps if I looked in those newspapers there, I might find you advertised as strayed, missing, or stolen."

Never was a shaft more randomly sent; never did one strike home with more telling effect. Though the soi-disant mining agent had himself under tolerable control, his change of countenance at those words fairly startled Mary. As he knew very well, he was *not* advertised in any of those papers, but still the allusion ——

"I beg your pardon," faltered the girl, who had spoken in mere sportive lightness. "I did not intend ——"

He interrupted her with a slight laugh, though his face—even to the lips—was still curiously white. "It is I who should apologise," he said. "Your words made me realise, and rather painfully, that there is nobody in the world who cares whether I am dead or alive."

"Surely you must be mistaken," said Mary, sympathetically.

The handsome dark eyes looking at her began to touch her fancy—a thing easily touched at twenty, and which many a woman takes for her heart, to the ruin and misery of her life. But—was it quite sure that Mary's fancy had not been touched by this good-looking patient of hers before?

The pale lips curved into a smile, more significant than words, at her remark. "I am not mistaken with regard to my friends," said Mr. Shepard. "It is likely, however, that I may have a few enemies who are kind enough to take an interest in my affairs, and—my movements."

It is probable that the words were spoken recklessly—heedlessly. And, as if to cover the indiscretion, he changed the topic.

"This Mr. Hale?—is he what people call a gentleman? Young fellows well-born take situations in schools sometimes."

"I don't know that he is particularly well-born," replied Mary. "He is to be a clergyman eventually."

"He is poor, no doubt?"

"At present—yes."

Mary Owen remembered that incautious admission of the stranger, and pondered upon it. Had it any foundation, she secretly asked herself. Her interest in him, naturally enough, waxed greater from the mystery which surrounded him. He was far above the level of any of the men whom she had ever known, and yet he was thrown upon her father's hospitality like the merest strolling vagabond. If, as her father had remarked, he had only had friends to inquire after him, or to write to! What to make of it puzzled her exceedingly, and she considered the problem more than was good for her, and shook her pretty head over it.

Other people shook their heads over it, too—to themselves: her

father, who distrusted his reticent guest, and Mr. Hale, who was jealously suspicious of Mary's attendance in the sick-room. But David Owen, though he probably knew very little of Arab customs, was Arabian in his ideas of hospitality; and the embryo clergyman nursed his jealous wrath in silence.

Thus the days continued to go on. Mr. Shepard improved rapidly in strength, once convalescence began to set in. A sofa from the best sitting-room was moved upstairs for him; and as he lay upon it in the old-fashioned large bow-window, open to the balmy air, Mary would sit near, work in hand: sometimes one of her sisters with her, more often not. The girls did not like the confinement of the sick-chamber; and believed this sick gentleman had fallen at the gate for their especial benefit: for Mary had little time now to see that they prepared their lessons properly for the dame's school to which they went in the morning. Meanwhile, his and Mary's intercourse was becoming quite easy, natural, and confidential: confidential except as regarded his past life.

"What's that you are so busy over?" he asked her one afternoon.

"This?" holding up some new work. "It is a shirt for Tom."

"You don't mean to say that you make all the shirts?"

"Partly so. The girls do the plain sewing and hemming at school, and I finish them."

"And you darn all the stockings?"

"Yes. Since my mother died, the sewing has fallen to me."

"I should think your mother was a good woman—judging by yourself?"

"She was, indeed. Good and refined; *how* refined, how good, you can never know. She was a lady born, and displeased her family when she married my father. He was only a farmer."

"I am sorry to have alluded to her—forgive me," was the hasty apology, as he saw the tears in Mary's eyes.

She miled at him through her wet eyelashes. "Do not be sorry. I like to speak of her. I will show you her likeness some day; it is painted in miniature. She was very beautiful, with a soft, sweet face."

"Just like you, I'll wager?"

"Ye—s," hesitated Mary, blushing violently at having to admit it, in conjunction with what she had just said. "But I can never be half as nice-looking as she was; or half as good."

"You must let other people judge of that," was the answer, given with a significant smile.

And thus, through the lovely days of closing summer, they sat and talked, growing more confidential with one another each day; his tone more unconsciously tender. He had taken to call her "Mary," and had asked her more than once why she would not call him by his Christian name, Francis. Mary, blushing ever, could not, in very shyness, bring

her lips to do it. What caused the shyness? Merely the reticence of girlish modesty—of a well-trained mind? Ah, no; it was something more than that. Mary Owen had learnt to love. This stranger, who had taken refuge within their gates, and of whom they knew nothing, had stolen her heart for all time. Had Tom Owen, who was very fond of fast speech, known the state of affairs, he might have said he would not give a button for old Hale's chance now.

One warm evening, when the whole of the family were sitting on the old-fashioned, capacious benches outside the windows, the stranger appeared unexpectedly amongst them. Tall, worn, shadowy, his graceful figure—and it was graceful—appeared in the doorway. Smiling, hesitating, as if beseeching a greeting, he looked down upon them.

They welcomed him warmly. Moved perhaps by his still wan looks, the farmer started up to give him his arm to a seat; the children buzzed about, eager to help, and put out their hands; all congratulated him on his recovery. All but Mr. Hale. That gentleman said nothing, and, amidst so many welcomers, the omission was not noticed.

Gradually, as if by instinct, the conviction of what this stranger was becoming to Mary Owen had been taking hold of Alfred Hale's mind. She was learning to love him—perhaps he was learning to love her. Had the tutor wanted confirmation of this, he had got it now. He caught the low, involuntary, passionate sound that broke from her lips when Shepard thus suddenly appeared; he saw the rush of crimson to her face, the flashing light of love in the eyes before the eyelids had time to hide them.

Sitting back in the bench corner, Mr. Hale watched everything; his reflections were very much more bitter than sweet. More forcibly and clearly than he had hitherto done, he realised the position of affairs—that this mysterious stranger had stolen from him the heart of his best love. There could be no mistake, none. He watched Mary's frankness with the stranger, and her solicitude for him—that he should have a comfortable seat, that he should not sit in a draught, that he did not feel exhausted and weak. More than this, he watched the manner of the latter with her—that easy yet respectful familiarity of the well-bred man; which even he, Alfred Hale, had not yet attained to. Why, they were as much at home with one another as though they had been acquainted for years.

Mr. Shepard shone to advantage that evening. None could mistake his superiority. He talked as a man of society—and of good society; and charmed them all. The tutor, uneasy both in mind and body, resented it palpably; and Mr. Shepard, detecting this, resolved to take a little amusement out of him, and behaved just as though he had some right of proprietorship in Mary.

How much of this was assumed for Mr. Hale's benefit, of course he could not know. That the stranger, aware of his jealous scrutiny, was

in pure mischief endeavouring to torment him as much as possible, did not enter his imagination. Yet, in a great measure, this was so. Though after a manner in love with Mary's beaux yeux, and inclined to make himself agreeable to her, independently of jealous schoolmasters, there can be no doubt that the presence of the schoolmaster gave a zest to the affair which was highly agreeable to Mr. Shepard.

Nor was this the only cause of offence given that evening. When they went indoors, the farmer asked Mr. Hale for "some music," and the latter produced a flute, with the sound of which Mr. Shepard had already grown wearily familiar. At sight of it he shrugged his shoulders, said a few words aside to Mary, shook hands with her and her father, and wished them all "good night."

But the whispered words and the movement of departure were not lost on the tutor. He rose to his feet with so quick a movement that his chair fell back with a crash to the floor.

"If it's my flute that is driving you away, sir," he said, in a quick, excited voice, "you need not disturb yourself. Mr. Owen will excuse me if I decline to play to-night. I do not wish to make myself disagreeable to anyone: not even to those"—he flashed a glance of wrath and love at Mary—"who take up with new friends and throw away old ones."

"My good friend," said the stranger, with the quiet, supercilious air of a man of the world, "I am sorry that you should construe my departure into an offence to yourself; but it is out of my power to say anything in reply to your observations except—good night!"

"You'll say something in reply to them at another time!" said the teacher, clenching his hand as he followed him into the hall.

Mr. Shepard turned, shortly and sternly, with a gleam in the dark eyes that the other did not altogether like.

"I have but one reply to make to those who are insolent to me," he said, scornfully; "and that reply, I tell you frankly, it will not be well for you to force me to give to *you!* I have no disposition to give it, either. Neither you nor your music can be of the least importance to me, sir. Stand aside, if you please, and let me pass."

Mr. Owen, who had opened the room door, watched him as he went up the staircase.

"What is the meaning of this, Hale?" he asked. "You were quarrelling, were you not, with our guest?"

"He deliberately insulted me. The moment I got out my flute ——"

"Nonsense! You took offence where none was given. Why couldn't you let the man go in peace, whether he liked your music or whether he didn't?"

"It was not only the music," replied the angry teacher, who had the great fault of not being able to keep his temper. "It is not *that.*"

"What is it then?"

"It—it—it is seeing the way he goes on with Miss Mary—whispering to her, and giving her his arm just to come indoors. You don't know who this man is that you have brought into your house, sir, and I warn you that you had better take care of your daughter."

"Mr. Hale! how dare you?" cried an indignant voice in the rear; and they turned to face Mary, her fair cheeks glowing, her bright eyes flashing. "Whatever my father may choose to say to you, *I* say that you have no right to speak in this manner of me, or of *him*."

"For all we know, the fellow may be a disreputable character," panted the tutor, almost beside himself. "He is not a fit companion for your daughter, Mr. Owen; he has no business to be here."

"If this house were not your temporary home, I should say *you* had no business to be here," flashed Mary, her own temper roused for once. Not for herself; but—how could she hear the slighting imputations upon *him?*

She took her bed candle as she spoke, and went up to her chamber. Mr. Owen, a man fond of peace, looked after her, and then at the angry-faced tutor.

"You have ruined your chance with Mary, young man," he quaintly observed.

"It is not I who have ruined my chance ——"

"Not that, as I believe, you ever had any."

"It is that man who has ruined it," cried the desperate lover, disregarding the interruption. "She has not been the same since he came. She ——"

"Stop!" again interrupted the farmer, laying his hand impressively upon the other's arm. "I refuse to hear more of this. It is true I know nothing of the man, except that he is my guest, a stranger under my roof; but I have perfect confidence in Mary—perfect. You must understand that."

"Many a man has had perfect confidence in a woman, and lived to repent it."

"Be silent, Mr. Hale. You don't, I think, know what you are saying."

"I know that your daughter as good as ordered me out of the house, sir. For the present, I will *go*. We have a week's holiday at the school, as you know; it begins to-morrow, and I will take it. have business at a distance."

"So much the better," said the straightforward farmer. "You will come back, I hope, with your temper cooled."

"And I trust, sir, that the next time your daughter finds an honest man to love her, she will treat him a little better than she has treated me."

With this final thrust, Mr. Alfred Hale disappeared for the night. And the next morning he went off for his week's holiday.

"Joy go with him!" cried David and Tom, flinging up their caps. "Father, he has lately been as sullen as a bear."

III.

After Mr. Hale's stormy departure, the time flew on quietly and serenely in the Owen household. Though daily growing stronger and showing himself less of an invalid, the stranger still lingered within their gates, and gave no sign of any intention to leave. "You are welcome to stay with us until you are quite strong and well," Mr. Owen had said to him more than once; for he regarded few things as more sacred than the laws of hospitality.

It might be that the attractions of Mary detained him; it might be that (supposing he had some motive for concealing himself) this out-of-the-way spot of earth was to him as a haven of safety. At any rate, here Mr. Shepard stayed.

And, now that he was amongst them, sitting at their board, just as the sullen tutor had been, they all grew to like him very, very much. With the farmer he conversed on the affairs of the world, so remote from them; David and Tom got him to go fishing and to give them all sorts of welcome information; the three young girls were violently in love with him, and avowed it. But for the mystery that did in a degree surround him, the farmer could have made a friend of this attractive man.

They were now in the delicious days of September. The whole earth in its warm beauty seemed to have put forth its attractions for this especial spot. At least, so thought Mary; as she and her sisters lingered out of doors in the pleasant air, by bush and brake, in the garden pertaining to the house, or under the fine mountains, Mr. Shepard ever by her side. Come what would, no days of her future life could ever bring a similar charm again.

The week passed happily. With the commencement of another, David and Tom went to school again. The tutor had not come back. Instead of that, the master, to his great wrath, received a letter from him, saying that the business he was endeavouring to transact was delayed; but that he hoped to return to his post shortly.

A few days yet went on; days of sweet serenity, of perfect happiness. At least, they were so to Miss Owen. Then came an announcement from the farmer that he should have to go on the following day to the county town, on business connected with his farm. He asked Mr. Shepard if he would like to take the other seat in his gig, and go with him. Mr. Shepard, thanking him for the offer, declined it; and the farmer started the next morning before daybreak.

They did not expect him home until after dark. It was more than a two hours' journey, even for swift Billy. Mr. Owen's visits to the large towns were rare, and when he did go, he liked to make the most of his stay there.

What, then, was the astonishment of two of the girls, Eleanor and Gwendolin, as they sat at work on the bench outside the window in the afternoon, to see their father approach from the direction of the stables: whither he had evidently driven at once to leave his horse and gig. What could be the meaning of his early return?

They asked it one of another, these two simple-hearted girls; but they did not dare to ask it of him. For on Mr. Owen's face lay an expression of gravity, rarely seen there; of intense trouble.

"Where is Mary?" he began.

"Gone over to Niton, papa: to take some cold meat and a few eggs to poor old Jenny Thomas. Is—is anything the matter, papa, that you have come back so soon?"

"Mr. Shepard—is he out also?" returned the farmer, leaving Eleanor's timid question unanswered.

"No, I think he is in his room."

Without another word, Mr. Owen proceeded to his guest's chamber, knocked, and entered it. What took place during that interview was known to themselves only. In a very short while—only a quarter of an hour, as it seemed to the children waiting below—both of them came forth from it. Mr. Shepard had his black valise in his hand, apparently packed for travelling.

"I am very sorry for this," said the farmer, in a low tone, as he held out his hand. "I would not turn anyone willingly from my gates, who has been a guest within them, as you have. But you perceive how it is. Your own safety renders it imperative."

"I thank you with all my heart, Mr. Owen. I am glad you know the truth now: it has sometimes been on my mind to tell it you, unquestioned. Perhaps we may meet again—in another country, if not in this. Should we never do so, believe me you will have my best gratitude as long as my life shall last; my truest wishes for the welfare of yourself and of your family."

"And you have my best wishes, and you know in what way I mean," returned the farmer. "I ought not to say as much; but I do, and I can't help it. You are sure you have money?"

"Plenty of it. Thank you truly for all."

"Eleanor, Gwendolin—bid good-bye to Mr. Shepard," said the farmer, as they emerged from the house. "He is going away."

"Going away!" echoed the girls, stricken aghast. "Oh, Mr. Shepard, will you not come back again?"

"I fear not," he answered with a smile, as he took their hands. And Eleanor, impressionable Eleanor, burst into tears. They had all

grown to like him so much! It seemed to her just then that it would have been easier to part with Tom or David.

The farmer went with him as far as the outer gate, shaking hands with him once again, by way of fareweli; and his guest walked away with a quick step. Mr. Owen, shading his eyes with his hand from the sunlight, watched the tall, slender, gentlemanly figure disappear from sight.

"I hope with all my heart he'll get clear away," soliloquised he. "I can't help liking him, in spite of all."

The sun was sloping towards the west, when Mary Owen came tripping along the fields from the poor neighbour she had been visiting, swaying her basket to and fro in her hand in very gleesomeness of heart. This part of the land was extremely wild. On the right, down in a deep glen, lay a mill that belonged to her father. It had always been a favourite resort of hers, it was so quiet and solitary; and many a time, during these few last golden days, had she and their stranger-guest sat on the green bank under the thick trees there, listening to the sound of the rushing water-wheel. But the mill was not at work to-day, and was deserted by the men.

She ran down the narrow path, intending to pass it, and ascend the wild, rocky path on the other side on her way home. Perhaps some latent hope whispered to her that *he* might have strolled as far this sunny afternoon. Yes! there he was. He seemed to have been sitting on the shady bank waiting for her; but he stood up as she came in sight.

Flushed, smiling, glowing with beauty, Mary ran lightly down. It was only when she reached him, and saw how pale and resolute he looked, that she felt surprised. For the warm, glowing welcome she was accustomed to was neither on his countenance nor tongue.

"I am glad that you have come!" he said, taking her hands. "I feared you might not. I thought you might be staying till night with Jenny Thomas, the old woman you went to see."

"Nay, I promised that I would be home for tea," she answered.

"And do you always keep your promises, Mary?"

"Always," she answered, blushing under the intent gaze. "At least, I try to do so. I am sure I have never broken one to you. Have I?"

"Never as yet," he answered. "But"—here a curiously hard look settled on his face—"I may put you to the test now. Sit down. I did not think it would have had to be quite so soon. Mary!"

She looked up at him in silence: awed at the sharp, solemn tone in which he spoke the word.

"Last evening, when we sat in this very spot, and the children were scampering up and down the break-neck path here, I asked you to be my wife when circumstances permitted, and you promised that you would be."

"Provided you could get my father's consent," she timidly answered, reddening much.

"Just so. But, Mary, I want you to fulfil your promise without his consent. I want you to trust to me wholly."

"What do you mean, Francis?"

"Before I tell you exactly what I mean, you must hear a sad tale. Listen. Your father has just heard it. I will make it as brief as possible.

"There lived a banker in a handsome and populous county town. He was a rich man. He had no children: but he made almost a son of a nephew, educated him extravagantly, sent him to college, supplied him well with cash, and then took him into the bank's counting-house. The young man went the way of many other young men who are thus reared: he got into debt and trouble. Tempted by one evil companion, he made use of money belonging to the bank: or, rather, *made* money by pledging a deed or two that belonged to it. The nephew had intended to redeem and replace these deeds before anything could have been discovered. But, like many another, I suppose, in a similar strait, he found he could not. Discovery came. Unfortunately not by the banker himself; he was gone abroad for his failing health; but by his partner—a plodding old curmudgeon, who disliked the nephew. The young man had to fly; to fly, to avoid being taken for the crime; and he got away safely. Have you followed my story, Mary?"

"Yes," answered Mary, her cheeks and lips perfectly bloodless. "What—was—his name?"

"The young man's? His name was Francis Shepard Stanley."

A long, terrible pause. Mary's beating heart seemed as if it would burst its bounds.

"You understand all too well now, my darling. This afternoon your house was surprised at the early return of your father, who came at once to my room. When he reached his destination this morning, and was going about his business in the town, here, there, and everywhere, he met that good tutor of our acquaintance, Mr. Alfred Hale. Mr. Hale had just arrived in the town also. His business, it seems, during his absence has been to ferret out who I am and all about me."

A groan of dismay broke from Mary's lips. Her companion gathered the hand, he held, closer into his.

"My gentleman was longer over his work than he hoped to have been, wanting the clue: for he did not know my Christian or surname, and my second baptismal name, Shepard, which I really have never used, did not appear in the public advertisements about me. However, Mr. Hale succeeded, and has set my enemies on my track. Some local warrant, or backing of a warrant, was required, it appears, before they could pounce upon me; and that was to be obtained in the county town in course of this morning. All this Hale triumphantly told your father. He, good man, listened quietly, said nothing, but

made his way back to his inn, and drove galloping off to warn me : he could not do otherwise, he said, by one who was his guest, though it was a wrong thing to do, and he might get into trouble over it were it known. Which it never will be, Mary : for you and I alone will ever be cognisant of it. And now you know all."

"And you have left our house to escape?" she gasped.

"Just so. If I can succeed, all will be well. My intention is to make my way as swiftly as possible to a town on the coast : marry you there, if you will come with me, sail abroad directly, and remain in private until the matter is settled. I *am certain* my uncle will take steps to settle it and free me the instant he returns. His illness has been so great that he could not even be told of the trouble. Will you go with me, Mary?"

"I don't understand you," she faintly gasped.

"Will you go *with* me, trusting to my honour to protect you, as I would a sister, on what must be a secret flight? Or will you follow me to the town we shall fix upon—I think it must be Liverpool—join me there, and be married before we sail?"

"I cannot do either. Oh, Francis!"—with a burst of agony—"you ought not to ask me. Without my father's consent I will never marry even you—and you must know that he would not give it. He has gone out of his way to warn and save you, and I can hardly understand his doing it : but he is full of stern probity."

Mr. Stanley—we will give him his true name at last—compressed his pale lips.

"Is this your true decision, Mary Owen?"

"Heaven knows that it *has* to be—that I have no alternative."

"And yet you have professed to care for me!"

"Professed!" she echoed—the only word catching her ear.

"You are ready to send me alone into exile, not caring whether I live or die?"

The accusation was bitterly unjust—and she felt it to be so to her heart's core. "Knowing all this," she said, "why did you seek my love?"

"Things will be made straight," he answered.

"And with my father? We have compared him sometimes to some of those old Scotch Covenanters—who, in their uprightness, never forgave a sin."

"It seems I was mistaken in you, Mary."

"No, no," she answered, with a great sob. "But—how can I do this thing that you require of me?"

She looked at him imploringly, her hands clasped in pain, her face up-turned. The trial was almost more than she could bear. Mr. Stanley strode about on the narrow path before the seat.

"You are like all women, Mary. I thought you were different—

better. I thought you loved me well enough to entrust yourself to me; to be my companion in exile—my own dear wife."

His voice softened, his face melted as he spoke, and the girl's heart leaped with a mighty thrill. For an instant she wavered: her heart did; not her judgment or her rectitude. Opening his arms he drew her face to his.

"You must decide *at once*, Mary. I have not a minute to lose. Already I have thrown away an hour of the precious time that ought to have been given to making good my escape, in waiting here for you. My love, will you not go with me?—will you not trust all to me? Believe me, I will never fail you. Surely you will not send me away alone!"

"I cannot go, Francis," she sobbed, amidst her raining tears. "I cannot, will not leave my father and my home clandestinely: and, as I say and you must know, from him there is no hope. Oh, it seems that I would rather have died than had to bear this cruel pain!"

"Then we must part!"

"Yes, we must part. And, oh Francis, my best beloved—I dare to call you so in this closing hour—let us part now; this moment; do not delay longer. Your liberty——"

"Perhaps in future, Mary," he interrupted, looking straight into her eyes, "if matters turn out well, we may yet meet again. And your father——"

A cry escaped her. Some movement on the opposite heights had caught her eye, and she knew that his pursuers were close upon him. Instinctively she drew him back into the thick trees, and they were both concealed by their shade.

"They are there," she whispered.

"Yes. No time to lose, indeed. I don't think they saw me."

But how was he to escape? If they came down into the glen, all was over. Two or three men were there, Mr. Hale one of them.

"Fortunate that they don't see my valise," whispered Mr. Stanley. "I lodged it just within the shed yonder."

"If they would only go away!" breathed Mary, in an agony; "go off on any of the roads—you might escape yet. There's one of them looking down!"

They hardly dared to breathe. They stood there, holding one another, as if for safety: at least, he held Mary. At that moment there occurred a tremendous crashing and crushing on this side, just above them: somebody was tearing down straight-foremost, without taking the trouble to seek the path.

"Farewell, my best and dearest," he whispered, his lips clinging to hers; "they shall never take me with life."

But the intruder was not a Bow Street runner, if the appellation may be used yet, but only Tom Owen. Tom Owen, being light and lithe

of limb, rather preferred the perpendicular way of getting down precipices. Mary, catching him by the jacket, to his intense surprise, whispered a confused explanation in three or four brief words.

"He has been a guest within our gates, Tom. We must not let him be taken, if anything we can do will save him."

"Taken! Of course not," responded Tom, warmly earnest, but quite bewildered. "We'll save you, Mr. Shepard. I'll throw those ruffians off the scent. And that rat of a Hale, too, to have done it!"

"Take care, Tom, my boy. You may do me more harm than good."

Away rushed Tom to the front, crashing through the trees. The three gentlemen on the opposite bank looked down at him like so many hyenas.

"Halloa!" roared Tom, looking up. "Why, that's never you, Mr. Hale! Glad to see you back again—but won't you just catch it from the master! He has had to hear our Latin homily this week—and you know he *can't*. I say, have you seen anything of Mary and Mr. Shepard? They went off to Treffyn this afternoon."

"Went to Treffyn this afternoon?" called back Hale, his voice echoing down the glen, sounding almost close to his trembling listeners' ears.

"The pair of them," shouted Tom. "It strikes me that's a *case*, you know, Mr. Hale. Don't know what will be said to it at home."

"How did they go? Which way did they take?" panted Hale, the information nearly stopping his breath.

"Went on Shanks' pony, and took the road by the old mine. It's the furthest, you know, but the shadiest, and they'd be sure to like *that*. Here, you just wait there till I come up and get round to you, and we'll go and meet them, if you like. Mary will be glad to see you after this long absence."

"We'll go on at once," replied Hale, "you can catch us up."

The three peering faces disappeared from the opposite bank like a shot. They had taken the bait. Tom Owen turned to crash up the bank again through the trees and brushwood, in order to overtake the men of law and keep up the farce. Mr. Stanley seized the hand of the ready-witted lad.

"Thank you, Tom; thank you ever. Should I escape I shall be your grateful debtor always."

"Don't lose time," whispered Tom in return. "Get out of this wilderness, and take the way to the left—you know. That's just the opposite direction to Treffyn, and you'll get across country and dodge them nicely."

A loud shout proclaimed Tom's arrival at the top of the bank. Making his way round the brow of the precipice, he saw the three hastening along towards the Treffyn road, and proceeded to catch them up with all the speed of his active legs.

"Not a moment to lose," whispered Mary, from amidst her sobbing breath. "May God speed you on your way!"

Wringing her hand with a sharp pressure, leaving his farewell upon her lips, and a few words of comfort for her heart, Francis Stanley caught up his valise, and was gone.

The stars had long been shining, and all the inmates of the house, save the farmer, had retired to their chambers, for he sent them up early, when Mr. Hale, and the would-be capturers, and Tom, arrived at the door, having cooled their heels on the Treffyn road.

"Not here again; never again, Mr. Hale," spoke the farmer, with dignity, spreading his hands to bar the tutor's entrance. "You would have betrayed my guest—one living under the same roof with yourself. Hush! Justified, you say? It may be; I enter not into the question. He is nothing to me, and his doings are nothing to me; but he was a partaker of my hospitality: you have betrayed that, and I can never receive you here again. Henceforth we are strangers."

"Father," called out Tom, while Mr. Hale stood in silence and mortification, "has Mr. Shepard got back yet with Mary?"

"No," spoke the farmer, sternly.

"Then," said the ready lad, turning to his companions, "you may depend it is as I said—that they are staying at Treffyn till to-morrow. Most likely at old Mother Llewellyn's: she has taken them to the play, I shouldn't wonder. They'd have been here long before this, you know, had they meant to return to-night."

"Come in, Tom," said the father, sternly, "that I may bar the door. Shepard here?"—to a question of the officer. "No, sir! I have told you that he is *not* here. I tell you no lie: ask your friend Hale whether I am to be believed."

Tom slipped in. Mr. Owen shut the door and bolted it, leaving the baffled men to watch the house outside, or to wend their weary way to search Treffyn, as might seem good to them.

And that was the ending, so far as the Owens were concerned, of the stranger who had sojourned with them. That the erring but attractive young man, Francis Shepard Stanley, made good his escape there was no cause to doubt; since neither from the newspapers nor any other source did they hear aught of his capture.

Would he ever return, a free man, to claim Mary? It was more than she dared to look for. But her future hopes, her heart's best life, had gone out with this stranger, when he went forth from within their gates.

DUKE RUTHERFORD.

IT was a fair sunny day in August. They were out on the cliffs, fathoms above the sea, at play. She a dark-eyed, wondrously beautiful girl of thirteen; he a tall, stalwart boy a year her senior. There was a wide difference in their stations in life. You had only to note the richness of her silk attire, the threadbare scantiness of his, to feel assured of that. No rich man's son would have been dressed quite so shabbily as Duke Rutherford: and yet, in spite of the worn-out clothes, the boy, in beauty of form and feature, might have been a fit son for a nobleman.

The children were gathering mosses from the rocks and chatting gaily together, forgetful of rank or station. They had met often thus for the last six years.

Duke's father was the agent of the estate of Lucy Delamere's high-bred mother. Their cottage was but a little distance from the Hall, and the children, in search of amusement, wandered out often to the cliffs, and whiled away sunny afternoons in juvenile sports. Duke gathered for his fair playfellow the brightest-tinted shells, and, in return, she brought him musty old books of romance and chivalry from the great library at the Hall, which he read and re-read, until his soul was filled with dreams and aspirations, vague, and sweet, and unreal as the visions of an opium-eater.

The Rutherfords had not always been dependents. Generations back there were noblemen in the family, but political differences had taken title and wealth from the name. Early in life, Hugh Rutherford, Duke's father, had become agent to Mr. Delamere; a post he had retained when Mr. Delamere died, leaving a widow and one only child, a girl, as sole heiress to his vast wealth and estates. Hugh Rutherford had married a young wife, beautiful and refined; but after a few years their singularly happy life was broken. Mrs. Rutherford died, and her husband had only his six months' old boy to toil for.

No restraint was put upon the intercourse between Duke Rutherford and Lucy Delamere by the proud lady mother of the young heiress. If she thought of the matter at all, she trusted to the inborn pride of her daughter, and to the cold contempt she had tried so faithfully to imbue her with—contempt of all that was low-born or ill-bred. Mrs. Delamere would never have thought of looking for a princely heart beneath the rough jacket of one she considered too far beneath her to merit even the tribute of a passing thought.

The sea breezes gave a beautiful bloom to the cheek of Lucy; and

the sports she shared with Duke rounded her limbs and gave grace and vigour to her step. Mrs. Delamere read her favourite novels, entertained her chosen company, and reigned queen at the Hall; and Lucy enjoyed the wild freedom of the cliffs.

The young girl was almost reckless in her daring at times. This afternoon she was in her most dangerous mood. A cluster of flowers, growing in a cleft of the rock below the surface of the cliffs, attracted her attention. She sprang towards them. Duke waved her back.

"It is perilous, Lucy," he said, hurriedly. "Look at the black rocks beneath. A single mis-step, and ——"

"I am no coward," she laughed, defiantly. "If you are pale, I am not; and I am going to carry these bright things home to mamma."

Before he could prevent her, she had swung herself over the precipice; and resting one foot on a narrow shelf of rock, her left hand clinging to a frail shrub that had taken root in the sparse earth at the top, with the other she grasped the coveted blossoms.

Duke, white and rigid, stood above her looking down. She shook the flowers above her head. "See! I dare do what a boy trembles at seeing done!"

She stopped hastily in the gay, taunting speech she was making. The treacherous rock under her feet crumbled and fell—there was only that little swaying shrub to hold her back from eternity.

Duke threw himself upon his face, reached over, caught her uplifted hands in his, and drew her up slowly, laboriously—for she was nearly his own weight, and he realized too well how much hung on the result to be hasty or reckless of his strength. He rose to his feet, lifting her up with him. For one moment, breathless and overcome by the thought of what she had escaped, she leaned against him; then turning away she seated herself on a rock.

"Oh, Duke!" she cried, pale with the terror of her late danger, "you have saved my life! What will mamma say? What can I give you as a keepsake, to show how grateful I am?" And she began to detach the heavy gold chain she wore at her girdle.

The boy's face flushed proudly as he put it from him.

"Give me the bunch of heliotrope in your hair," he said. "I want nothing else."

She pulled it out and laid it in his hand.

"You will throw it away to-morrow when it is withered," she laughed.

"No; I shall never throw it away!"

The day was setting in steel-blue clouds; great banks of them obscured the setting sun. From the troubled sea vast masses of drenching fog swept up the rocky coast and settled heavily down on the land.

That night Mr. Rutherford called Duke into his bed-chamber, where

he kept his private desk and his meagre store of books. He took from an ebony casket a ring set with large diamonds.

"There, my son," he said, "this is the only thing I have on earth to show that noble blood flows in our veins. That ring belonged to my great-grandfather, the Duke of Somerton. It cost one thousand pounds. It will bring readily more than half that sum. I give it to you. Will you keep it to show the world that your ancestors were nobles—or ——" He paused and looked into the face of the boy.

"Or what, father?" Duke's face was eager, hopeful; already he had half divined his father's meaning.

"You love books, Duke. I had thought you might desire an education. The proceeds of that ring will defray your expenses at school—maybe help you through college. But you can keep it if you choose. Which shall it be?"

"Father! knowledge before anything else in this world! What care I if my body starve, so that my mind be fed?"

So it was decided. A fortnight afterwards Duke left Romney and entered the renowned school at C——.

Six years passed. Duke had been six months at college and was home on a brief vacation.

Miss Delamere had completed her education and come "out": a wonderfully beautiful and accomplished young lady, followed by a train of obsequious admirers.

One still July night she stole away from the revelry at the Hall, and went, as of old, to the cliffs: to the very spot where Duke Rutherford had saved her life. Chance had taken him that night to the same spot. He was sitting silent in the moonlight, looking out at the sea, thinking of that bygone day when she had given him the heliotrope for a keepsake. All these six years the heliotrope had been kept by him as his greatest treasure. Her image had been ever present with him, spurring him on to exertions in his studies, making every fresh victory, every upward step, a triumph for her sake. And yet he never asked himself why this was, or what it would end in. It was so, and he could not help it. But he felt that to aspire eventually to the hand of Lucy Delamere, the richest heiress in the county, the daughter of one of the proudest women in England, was as hopeless an aim as an attempt to grasp an ignis fatuus.

He heard her step—perhaps the thrill at his heart told him who was coming. He rose and turned towards her, waiting her pleasure. She might recognize him or not, just as she chose.

She passed him with a haughty glance. He did not flinch, but stood with folded arms—his tall, manly figure outlined against the purple sky, his face lit up by the young moon. A faint flush rose to her white forehead.

"Is it Duke Rutherford?"

"Miss Delamere? Will you not welcome me home?"

She gave him her hand. After all, old memories held still their sway in her heart.

Some secret audacity moved him to say it. He bent over her and whispered—"I have the heliotrope yet, Lucy."

Her eyes blazed; she snatched her hand from him as if his touch had stung her. "Remember to whom you are speaking!" she said, sharply. "I have other business than listening to the silly talk of a love-sick boy! Good night to you, Mr. Duke Rutherford."

Duke gazed after her as she hastened away.

"The time may come," he muttered, "yes, it may happen that she will be glad to unsay those words! I can wait."

Six years passed again. Duke Rutherford was making a name in the land. On his graduation he had studied law, been admitted to the bar in due time, and after two years was in successful practice, one of the most rising men in his profession.

Wealth came to him slowly, but fame was not chary. He had turned his attention and his leisure moments to literature, and already ranked high as a poet. His father was dead. There was no tie, save memory, to bind him to the old place at Romney. So he travelled, when he could do so with benefit.

He frequently met Lucy Delamere in the gay world. Their old familiar footing of early days had given place to a colder and more distant acquaintanceship. He could not forget the hint he had whispered to her respecting the heliotrope that hot July night. Her pride had taken alarm, yet to him she was and ever would be the one woman the world contained. His heart never for one moment swerved from its passionate allegiance. And she? What meant that frequent absence of mind, that dreamy look in the beautiful eyes, that constant look of sadness on the exquisite face? What meant that sudden flush, that lighting up of the features at the first moment that his name was announced on entering a room? Were love and pride having a battle? It would seem so, for on his approaching her the light and the flush would die away, and a cold, proud word would be his greeting.

Suddenly it was announced that Mrs. and Miss Delamere were going to America. An illness had attacked the elder lady, and a sea voyage was recommended by her physicians as her only chance of recovery. They had advised Australia, but to this she would not listen; so long a voyage seemed to her like bidding farewell to earth. She resolved to try the efficacy of a trip to New York.

The news reached Mr. Rutherford amongst others, and startled him. Could he make use of this opportunity? For some time past a certain matter of business had demanded his presence in America, but he had

been unwilling to devote the time to the journey. It was now the commencement of the long vacation, and, so far, circumstances were in his favour. As he thought of the long and close proximity to Lucy Delamere this voyage would give him, and of what it might bring about, his heart leaped with hope and his face flushed as the blood coursed more rapidly through his veins : for the Duke Rutherford of bygone days, and the Duke Rutherford of the present, to whom the highest honours of his profession were possible of attainment, were two widely different men.

So it came to pass that one day he found himself on board a steamer bound for New York, and Mrs. and Miss Delamere were amongst the passengers.

The second day of the voyage they were all on deck at sunset, promenading, laughing, chatting, enjoying the fresh breezes. More than ever, as Mr. Rutherford gazed from a distance at Lucy Delamere, he confessed that her youth had not made false prophecies of the glory of her womanhood. Her wealth of dark hair rippled away from her broad white forehead ; her eyes were deep and fathomless as some woodland spring, into which the sunshine never looks ; her lips red, ripe, perfect ; her whole air and bearing were full of haughty grace.

She was leaning on the arm of a tall, proud-looking man ; but, though she smiled at his soft nothings, she was gazing out, over and beyond him and his range of th ought, to the sea stretching so darkly blue and boundless to meet the wilight glory.

Duke Rutherford stopped before her just as she disengaged herself from her companion.

" It is the same old ocean which we used to look at from the cliffs, Miss Delamere," he said, quietly.

She was leaning over the side of the vessel, looking down at the water. She lifted her eyes, shuddered slightly, and drew up her shawl. Duke assisted her.

" It is like going back to my lost boyhood to see you," he continued. " I ——"

She stopped him with a haughty gesture. Her late companion approached. He was a stranger to Mr. Rutherford, and she introduced them to each other—" Sir George Trevor, Mr. Rutherford."

They bowed coldly. They would never be any better acquainted. There was nothing in their natures which would assimilate.

After this Miss Delamere and Mr. Rutherford never met alone. Whether she was afraid of her own strength if brought too much into contact with his winning presence ; afraid that her pride would have to give way to the dictates of her heart, cannot be known. Certain it is that she allowed him no opportunity of pleading his suit.

The voyage was drawing to a close. They were nearing the end. A great storm arose ; the vessel was driven far out of her track, and

drifted down to the Cape. One dark, direful night, in spite of skill and frenzied effort, the ship struck the rocks of a lee shore, and parted!

A little moment, to realize the dread horror of their situation, only was left for those on board. Miss Delamere, pale, but calm, was holding the arm of Sir George Trevor; her friends, shrieking and terrified, stood near. She was not looking at the threatening destruction before her, but over her shoulder with a hungry, wistful something in her eyes, as if she forgot what she saw not. The expression died out as Duke Rutherford appeared; for an instant their eyes met. In that moment he knew he was beloved with a wild fervour even equal to his own.

Then there was a dull plunge, a wild shriek of agony, and the water swarmed with struggling human beings! The world had grown dark to Lucy, but she felt herself borne up by some power beyond her own strength—upward and onward through the billows, till her feet touched the firm shore of the Cape. Then, into the light and warmth of a fisher's cottage, and when they had laid her down on the rude settle she opened her eyes, and saw—Duke Rutherford.

"You saved me?" she asked.

"I had that honour."

"And my mother?"

"She is saved also."

The door opened, and Sir George Trevor appeared. Whatever Lucy might have said by way of thanks, was checked by his entrance, and directly afterwards, Duke went out. A few days later on, a vessel from the Cape conveyed amidst other passengers, Mrs. and Miss Delamere and Sir George Trevor back to England. Mr. Rutherford proceeded to New York and accomplished his mission.

It was months before he and Miss Delamere met again, and then it was at the old place on the cliffs at Romney. Mrs. Delamere was dead; the shock of the shipwreck had proved too much for her, and she returned to England only to die. Lucy had been to visit her grave, and on her return, sat for a moment on the grey, familiar rock to look out on the wintry sea. Her eyes were still wet; she had been weeping.

Duke found her thus, and seating himself beside her, drew her head down on his shoulder.

"Lucy," he said, "I love you. I defy your contempt. I dare repeat it to you. I love you!"

For a moment it seemed to him that she clung to him, then cast him away, and rose to her feet. And when she spoke, her voice was cold and unmoved. "On new year's eve I am to be married to Sir George Trevor."

Duke started up—seemed about to make some impetuous speech, checked himself, and left her.

And she threw herself down where he had stood, moaning out—"Oh, pride! pride! it will be my death!"

* * * * * * * * * * *

It was the last day of the old year.

Duke Rutherford, a stern and gloomy man, was about to bid adieu to his native land for a long season.

He did not wish to breathe the air of the same country with Lucy, and she the wife of another. People are different, you know. Some keep their disappointments ever at heart, others put them eternally out of their reach, in the past. Duke wished to free himself from memory. He had destroyed everything but the heliotrope, and even that should be sacrificed, he said, when the ocean rolled between it and the soil which had nourished it.

It was a dark, moonless night, with prophecies of snow in the air. He shut the door of the cottage where his father had died, and went out for a walk. He avoided the path to the cliffs; he had closed his heart to all dreams of tenderness.

Almost unconsciously he turned his steps towards Delamere Hall. It rose up, a gloomy, massive pile, lighted only by the red firelight at a single window. To-morrow night it would blaze with the lamps lit to shine upon *her* bridal.

He paused to turn back, but something led him on—through the deserted gardens, up to the broad door, which stood ajar. All was quiet. The guests had retired for the night. Only a few tardy servants were up—it would do no harm to glance within.

He stepped to the door of the room where he had seen the light, and pushed it softly open. He saw no one. Still he went on, and sat down in a great lounging chair before the warm blaze. For a moment, he said to himself, he would sit in the chair she had recently occupied; gaze into the dying embers she too had gazed into.

Someone rose from a sofa at the other end of the room. He started up, an apology on his lips, for his audacious intrusion. She—it was Lucy—clad, not in bridal robes, but in sable vestments, and destitute of ornament, came towards him, looked up into his eyes, and let her white hands rest upon his shoulders. "Duke," she said, at last, her eyelids drooping, her cheeks crimson, "have I offended past forgiveness?"

He did not answer: only looked at her. She went on persistently. "I will let the truth speak, Duke. I love you! I have loved you all along! But pride came nigh to being my ruin! Thank God! at last, I have clean hands and a pure heart! I have dismissed Sir George Trevor, and true to myself, true to you, I cast aside all womanly modesty and shame, and tell you that I love you!"

"Lucy," he said, "is this thing true? Is all at an end between you and that man?"

"All—all," she whispered, softly. "For ever."

Duke Rutherford pressed her more closely to him, and left his first warm kiss upon her lips. She had found her haven at last. Love, as it ever should, had conquered pride.

He gathered her into his arms. "And whose are you now?"

"Yours, if you will take me."

And Duke Rutherford forgot his animosity to England, and did not go abroad.

MY DOROTHY AND I.

WE sat together in the dusk, my Dorothy and I,
Not a breeze was in the trees, nor star out in the sky;
We had been talking at our work, but then a silence fell,
Save that her tale a nightingale poured out with yearning swell.

My Dorothy and I are friends: we met five years ago;
How she was bred and how bestead, the whole wide world may know.
But I learned something that still night—that night we spake no word;
I know too well to ever tell the tale I never heard.

God speaks to us without a voice—our souls are one with Him:
Words are like rain upon a pane that makes the daylight dim.
And by the gladness of the glow He spreads on earth and sky
We know He bears all sins and fears, and knows how they must die.

Dorothy's face is keen and strong: her voice is glad and sweet—
Her walk is light as angels bright along the common street.
Dorothy's face that night was calm as theirs who look on Death,
Nor try to hide nor turn aside, nor even hold their breath.

Dorothy's mouth is firmly set, I know the reason why:
Some awful stroke her heart-strings broke, and yet she gave no cry.
I cannot guess to what grim pile her life was ever bound,
But by the sight I saw that night her soul was faithful found.

Strange thoughts half waken sometimes: and I wonder may it be
That angels' books are made of looks whose meaning angels see.
'Tis an old belief that in a hush the angels ever come—
And love, a flame, may show the name of tales they carry home.

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXXI.

HUMILIATION.

AGAIN the weeks and the months went on, bringing round the autumn season of another year. For in real life—and this is very much of a true history—time elapses imperceptibly when it has little of event to mark its progress. Seasons succeed each other, leaving not much to tell of behind them.

It was but a monotonous life at best—that of the Raynors. It seemed to be spent in a quiet, constant endeavour to exist; a patient, perpetual struggle to make both ends meet: to be fed, and not to starve; to remain under that poor sheltering roof that covered Laurel Cottage, and not to have to turn out of it; to contrive that their garments should be decent, something like gentlepeople's, not in rags.

But for Edina they would never have done it. Even with her fifty pounds a year, without *her* they would never have got on. She managed and worked, worked and managed, and had ever a cheerful word for them all. When their spirits failed, especially Mrs. Raynor's, and the onward way looked unusually dark and dreary, it was Edina who talked of the bright day-star in the distance, of the silver lining that was sure to be in every cloud. But for Edina they might almost have lost faith in Heaven.

The one most altered of all of them was Charles. Altered in looks, in bearing, in manners; above all, in spirit. All his pride had flown; all his self-conscious importance had disappeared, as does a summer wind; flown, and disappeared for ever. Had the discipline he was subjected to been transient, lasting for a few weeks, let us say, or even months, its impressions might have worn away with renewed favourable circumstances, had such set in again, leaving no trace for good. But

when this kind of depressing mortification continues for years, the lesson it implants on the mind is generally permanent. Day by day, every day of his life, and every hour in the day, Charles Raynor was subjected to the humiliations (as he looked upon them, and to him they were indeed such) that attend the position of a working clerk. He who had been reared in the notions of a gentleman, and had believed himself to be the undoubted future possessor of Eagles' Nest, found himself reduced by fate to this subordinate capacity, ordered about by the gentlemen clerks, and regarded as an individual not at all to be associated with them. "Raynor, do this; Raynor, do the other; Raynor, go thither; Raynor, come hither." He was at their beck and call, and obliged to be; he had to submit to them as his superiors, not only his superiors in the office, but his superiors as men; above all, he had to submit to their off-hand tones, which always implied, unwittingly perhaps to themselves, but all too apparent to Charles's ear, a consciousness of the distinction that existed between them. They were gentlemen; he was of the fraternity of those that labour for their bread as servants to others.

How galling this was to Charles Raynor, you, my reader, may imagine; but it can never be described. At first it was all but unbearable. Over and over again he thought he must run away from it, and escape to a land where these distinctions exist not. He might dig for gold in California; he might clear a settlement for himself in the backwoods of America: and the life in either place would be as paradise compared with this one at Prestleigh and Preen's. Nothing but the broad fact that the weekly wages he earned were absolutely necessary to aid in his mother's and the family's support, detained him. To give that aid was his imperative duty before God: for, had it not been through him and his supine carelessness that they were reduced to this extremity of need? So Charles Raynor, helped on by the ever-ready whispered word of counsel from Edina, *endured* his troubles, put up with his humiliation, and bore onwards with the best resolution he could call up.

And, as the time went on, he grew to feel them somewhat less keenly: habit reconciles us in a degree to the worst of all things, no matter what that worst may be. But he had learnt a lesson that would last him for his whole life; never again could he be the arrogant young fellow who thought the world was made for his especial delectation. He had gained experience; he had found his level; he saw what existence was worth, and that those who would be happy in it must first learn and understand their duties in it. His very nature was changed: haughty self-sufficiency, selfish indifference had given place to modest self-containment, to a subdued thoughtfulness of habit, to an earnest sense of others' needs as well as his own, and to a settled wish to help them. Frank Raynor, with all his sunny-heartedness, his

boundless geniality, could not be more ready with a helping hand, than was Charles. No other discipline, perhaps, that the world could inflict would have had this same effect upon Charles Raynor; it had made a man of him, and, if a subdued, a good one. And so, he went on, reconciled in a degree to his changed life after his two years' spell at it, and looking forward to no better prospect for the future; all prospect seemed so entirely hopeless.

A little fresh care had come upon them this autumn, in the return of Alice. Changes had taken place in the school at Richmond, and her services were no longer required. Edina borrowed the advertisement sheet of the *Times* every morning, and caused Alice to write to any notice that appeared likely. As yet—a fortnight had gone on—nothing had come of it.

"Nobody seems to want a governess," remarked Alice one Monday morning, as they rose from breakfast, and Charles was brushing his hat to depart. "I suppose there are too many of us."

"By the one half," assented Edina. "Some lady in this neighbourhood recently advertised for a governess for her daughters, directing the answers to be addressed to Jones's library, where we get these papers. Mr. Jones told me that the first day the post brought more than one hundred letters."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Alice.

"The lady engaged one of the applicants," continued Edina, "and then discovered she was the daughter of a small inferior shopkeeper at Camberwell. That put her out of conceit of governesses, and she has sent her children to school."

"I should not wish to be hard, I'm sure, or to speak against any class of people," interposed Mrs. Raynor, in her meek, deprecating voice; "but I do think that some of the young women who put themselves forward as governesses would do much better for servants. These inferior persons are helping to jostle the gentlewomen governesses out of the field—as Edina calls it."

"Will they jostle me?" cried Alice, looking up in fear. "Oh, Charley, I wish you could hear of something for me!—you go into the world, you know."

Charles, saying goodbye and kissing his mother, went off with a smile at the words: he was thinking how very unlikely it was that he should hear of anything. Governesses did not come within the radius of Prestleigh and Preen's. Nevertheless, singular to say, Charles did hear tell of a vacant situation that selfsame day, and heard it in the office. It chanced in this way:

In the course of the afternoon the head clerk despatched Charles to Mr. Preen's room with a message. He was about to deliver it when Mr. Preen waved his hand to him to wait: a friend of his who had been sitting with him had risen to take his leave.

"When shall we see Mrs. Preen to spend her promised day with us?" asked the gentleman, as he was shaking hands. "My wife has been expecting her all the week."

"I don't know when you will see her," was the reply. "The little girls' governess has left; and, as they don't much like going back to the nursery to the younger children, Mrs. Preen has them with her."

"The governess left, has she?" was the answering remark. "I fancied you thought great things of her."

"So we did. She suited extremely well. But she was called home last week in consequence of her mother's serious illness, and now sends us word that she will not be able to leave home again."

"Well, you will easily find a substitute, Preen."

"Two or three ladies have already applied, but Mrs. Preen did not fancy them. She will have to advertise, I suppose."

Charles drank in the words. He delivered the message, and took Mr. Stroud the answer, his head full of Alice. If she could get the situation! Mrs. Preen seemed a nice woman, and the two little girls were nice: he had seen them occasionally at the office. Alice would be sure to be happy there.

Sitting down to his desk, he went on with his writing, making one or two mistakes, and drawing down upon him the anger of Mr. Stroud. But his mind was far away, deliberating whether he might, or could, do aught.

Speak to Mr. Preen? He hardly liked to do it: the copying clerks kept at a respectful distance. And yet, why should he not? It seemed to be the only chance. Then came in a thought that made Charley's face burn like fire: would *his* sister be deemed worthy of the post? Well, he could but make the trial.

Just before the time of quitting for the night, Charles went to Mr. Preen's room, knocked at the door, and was bade to enter. Mr. Preen was standing in front of his desk, in the act of locking it, and a gentleman sat close before the nearly-extinguished fire in the large easy chair which had been old Mr. Callard's. Charles could see nothing but the back of his head, for the high, well-stuffed chair hid all the rest of him. He had a newspaper in his hand, and was reading it by the light of the one gas-burner; the other burner had been put out. To see this stranger took Charles aback.

"What is it?" questioned Mr. Preen.

Charles hesitated. "I had thought you were alone, sir."

"All the same. Say what you want."

"I have taken the liberty of coming to speak to you on a private matter, sir; but——" There he stopped.

"Say it, say it," cried Mr. Preen.

"When I was in this room to-day, sir, I heard you tell a gentleman that your little girls were in want of a governess."

"Well?"

"Sir, what I am about to say may seem to you presumptuous—but my sister is seeking for just such a situation. If you—if Mrs. Preen—would but see her!"

"Your sister?" returned the lawyer, with, Charles thought, cold surprise. It damped him: made him feel shrinkingly, sensitively little.

"Oh, pray do not judge of my sister by me, sir!—I mean by the position I occupy here," implored Charles, all his pre-arranged speeches forgotten, and speaking straight out of his wounded feelings, his full heart. "You only know me as a young man working for his daily bread, and very poor. But indeed we are gentlepeople: not only by birth and education, but in mind and habits. I was copying a deed to-day, the lease of a farm on the estate of Eagles' Nest. Do you know it, sir?"

"Know what?" asked Mr. Preen. "That you were copying it, or the deed, or the estate?"

"Eagles' Nest."

"I know it only from being solicitor to its owner. As my predecessor, Mr. Callard, was before me."

"That estate was ours, sir. When Mr. George Atkinson came to take possession of it he turned us out. It had come to my father from his sister, Mrs. Atkinson, and we lived in it for a year, never dreaming it possible that it could be wrested from us. But at the year's end a later will came to light: my aunt had left Eagles' Nest to Mr. George Atkinson, passing my father over."

Charles stopped to gather breath and firmness. The remembrance of his father, and of their subsequent misfortunes and privations, well-nigh unnerved him. Mr. Preen listened in evident surprise.

"But—was your father Major Raynor, of Eagles' Nest?"

"Yes, sir."

"You never mentioned it."

"To what end if I had?" returned Charles: while the stranger took a momentary glance across his shoulder at Charles, and then bent over his newspaper again, as though the matter and the young clerk were no concern of his. "Now that my position in life has so much altered, I would rather let people assume I was born a copying clerk, than the heir to Eagles' Nest."

"It sounds like a romance," cried Mr. Preen.

"For us it has been, and is, only too stern reality: but I do not wish to trouble you with these affairs, sir, and I should not have presumed to allude to them but for wishing to show you that Alice is superior to what you would imagine her to be as my sister. She is a very excellent governess indeed, accomplished, and a thorough lady."

"And you say she is in want of a situation?"

"Yes, sir. She has been for two years teacher in a school at Richmond. If Mrs. Preen would but consent to see her!—if she would but try her!—I think, I know, she would prove worthy. I do not say so on purpose to get her the place," he continued, earnestly and truthfully, "but because I do really believe she could and would faithfully fulfil its duties. I would not otherwise urge it: for we have learnt not to press ourselves forward at the expense of other people's interests, however urgent the need."

"Well, look here, Raynor: I cannot say anything myself about this matter; it is Mrs. Preen's business entirely," spoke the lawyer, upon whom Charles's story and Charles's manner of telling it had made an impression. "If your sister likes to call and see Mrs. Preen, she can."

"Oh, thank you; thank you very much, sir," said Charles. "I am sure you will like Alice."

"Stay; not so fast"—for Charley was leaving the room in eager haste. "Do you know where my house is?"

"To be sure, sir—Bayswater. I have been up there with messages for you."

"So that's young Raynor, is it!" cried the gentleman at the fire, turning round as Charles went out, and taking a look at his back.

"It is young Raynor, one of our copying clerks," acquiesced Mr. Preen. "But I never knew he was one of the Raynors who were connected with Eagles' Nest."

"Is he steady?—hardworking?"

"Quite so, I think. He keeps his hours punctually, and does his work well. He has been here nearly two years."

"Is not upstart and lazy?"

Mr. Preen laughed. "He has no opportunity of being either. I fancy he and his family have to live in a very humble, reduced kind of way. If they were the Raynors of Eagles' Nest—and of course they were, or he would not say so—they must have been finding the world pretty hard of late."

"So much the better," remarked the stranger. "By what I have heard, they needed to find it so."

"He has to make no end of shifts, lacking means. At first the clerks made fun of him; but they left it off: he took it so helplessly and patiently. His clothes are often threadbare; he walks to and fro, instead of riding as the others do, though I fancy it is close upon three miles. I don't believe he has a proper dinner one day out of the six."

The stranger nodded complacently: as if the information gave him intense satisfaction.

"I wish I could persuade you to come home and dine with me," resumed Mr. Preen, as he concluded his preparations for departure.

"I am not well enough. I am fit for nothing to-night but bed. Will one of your people call a cab for me? Oh, here's Prestleigh."

As Charles had gone out, dashing along the passage from his interview, he nearly dashed against Mr. Prestleigh, who was coming up it, some papers in his hand.

"Take care, Raynor! What are you in such a hurry about? Is Mr. George Atkinson gone?"

"Who, sir?" asked Charles, struck with the name.

"Mr. George Atkinson. Is he still with Mr. Preen?"

"Some gentleman is with him, sir. He is sitting over the fire."

"The same, no doubt. He is a great invalid just now."

Charles felt his face flush all over. So, it was the owner of Eagles' Nest before whom he had spoken. What a singular coincidence! The only time that a word had escaped his lips in regard to their fallen fortunes, *he* must be present, and hear it! And Charley felt inclined to wish his tongue had been tied first. All the world might have been welcome to hear it, rather than George Atkinson.

The way home was generally long and weary, but this evening Charles found it light: he seemed to tread upon air. His thoughts were filled with Alice, and with the hope he was carrying to her. Never for a moment did he doubt she would be successful. He already saw her, in imagination, installed at Mrs. Preen's.

Edina went to Bayswater with Alice in the morning. A handsome house, well set up. Mrs. Preen, interested in what she had heard from her husband, received them graciously. She liked them at first sight. Though very plain in dress, not to say poor, she saw that they were gentlewomen.

"It cannot be that I am speaking to Mrs. Raynor?" she cried, puzzled at Edina's youthful look.

Edina set her right: she was *Miss* Raynor. "The result of possessing no cards," thought Edina. "I never had but fifty printed in my life, and most of those got discoloured with years.——Mrs. Raynor is not strong enough to walk so far as this," she said aloud.

"But surely you did not walk!" cried Mrs. Preen.

"Yes, for walking costs nothing," replied Edina with a smile.

"The Raynor family, if I have been rightly informed, have experienced a reverse of fortune."

"A reverse such as rarely is experienced," avowed Edina. "From affluence and luxury they have been plunged into poverty. If you, madam, are what, from this short interview, I judge you to be, the avowal will not tell against our application."

"Not in the least," said Mrs. Preen, cordially, for she was a cordial mannered, warm-hearted, sensible woman. "We do not expect rich young ladies to go out as governesses."

Well, the result was that Alice was engaged, and they were invited

to stay for luncheon. Alice played, and her playing was approved of; she sang one short song, and that was approved of. Mrs. Preen was really taken with her. She was to have thirty guineas a-year to begin with, and to enter the day after the morrow.

"I can buy mamma a new black silk by-and-by, with all that money," said Alice, impulsively, with a flushed, happy face. And though Mrs. Preen laughed at the remark, she liked her all the better for it: it was so naive and genuine.

"Oh, my dear child, I am sure God is helping you!" breathed Mrs. Raynor, when they got back home and told her the news.

Then all was preparation: two days' time, scarcely that, was not much in which to make Alice ready. Edina worked like a slave, doing the chief part towards it, even washing and ironing some light things with her own hands, trimming a bonnet, renovating more than one dress, packing, and giving snatches of pleasant counsel to her for whom all this was being done. It chanced that that week they were short of work—the nets, so far as Laurel Cottage was concerned, were taking a temporary holiday. It occasionally was so. "But see," said Edina, "how well things happen. Had we been busy this week, I could not have given my time to Alice and to work. The one or the other must have been neglected."

On the afternoon appointed, Thursday, Alice went to take up her abode at Mrs. Preen's, accompanied, as before, by Edina. Poverty brings us acquainted with habits before unknown, and necessity, it is said, is a hard taskmaster; but, nevertheless, it was not deemed well that Alice should walk alone in the streets of London. Edina left her in safety, and saw for a moment her pupils—two nice little girls of eight and ten years old.

Alice was taking off her bonnet in the chamber assigned her when Mrs. Preen entered it.

"We shall have a few friends with us this evening, Miss Raynor," she said. "It may give you a little pleasure to come to the drawing-room and join them."

"Oh, thank you," said Alice, her face beaming at the unexpected, and, with her, very rare treat. "If I can—if my boxes come. They were sent off this morning by the carrier."

The boxes came. Poor Alice might have looked almost as well had they stayed away, for her one best dress was an old black silk. Prettily made for evening wear, it is true; but its bits of white lace and its ribbon trimmings could not hide the fact that the silk itself was worn and shabby.

The few friends consisted of at least thirty people, all of them very smart. Mrs. Preen introduced her to a young lady, a Miss Knox, who was chatty and pleasant, and told her many of the names. But after a while Miss Knox went away into the next room, leaving Alice alone.

She felt something like a fish out of water. Other people could move about here and there and anywhere, and talk with this acquaintacne and laugh with that; but Alice, very conscious of being only the governess, did not like to do so. She stood in the corner, near one of the open windows, within shade of the muslin curtains that were being blown about by the draught, looking alternately down on the road below and across the rooms.

Suddenly, her whole conscious being seemed struck as by a blow. Her pulses stopped, her heart felt faint, every vestige of colour forsook her cheeks. Walking slowly over the carpet, within a yard of her, came William Stane.

Not until he was close up did he see her standing there. A moment's hesitation, during which he seemed to be as surprised as she, and then he held out his hand.

"It is Miss Raynor, I think?"

"Yes," replied Alice, her hand meeting his, and the hot crimson flushing her cheek again. How well he was looking!—how well! Better, far better looking than he used to be. He seemed to have *grown*—and yet that could not be; to be of more importance. In one sense of the word he was of more, for he had risen into note as a pleader, young at the Bar though he was, and his name was often on the lips of men. His presence brought back to Alice the old days of Elysium at Eagles' Nest, and set her heart aching.

"Are Sir Philip and Lady Stane quite well?" she asked, in the sheer need of saying something: for the silence was embarrassing.

"My mother is well, thank you; my father is very poorly indeed. He is a confirmed invalid now."

The tone of his answer was frigidly cold. Alice felt it painfully. She stood there before him in the blaze of light, all too conscious of her shabby dress, of her subdued manner, of all her other detriments. Not a yard off sat a young lady in rich white silk and lace, diamond bracelets gleaming on her arms. Oh, but times had changed!

"Are any of your family here to-night, Miss Raynor? I do not see them."

"No; oh no;—I am the governess," replied poor Alice, making the confession in bitter pain. And he might hear it in her voice.

"Oh—the governess," he assented, quite unmoved. "I hope Mrs. Raynor is well."

"Not very well, thank you."

Mr. Stane moved away. She saw him several times after that in different parts of the room; but he did not come near her again.

And that, the first night that Alice spent at her new home, was passed in the same cruel pain, her pillow wet with tears. Pain, not so much felt for the life of ease she had once enjoyed, the one of labour she

had entered upon, not so much in regret for the changed place she held in the world, but for the loss of the love of William Stane.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EBONY DESK.

But there is something yet to tell of the afternoon. It was about five o'clock when Edina got home. Very much to her astonishment she saw a gentleman seated by Mrs. Raynor. The tea things were on the table. Bobby sat on the floor. Kate stood on one leg, her back to the window, gazing with some awe at the visitor—so unusual an event in the retired home. He was a scanty-haired little gentleman, the top of his head so white that it looked as if it were powdered; with cold light eyes, and a trim, neat dress. Edina knew him at once, and held out her hand. It was Street, the banker.

It was evident that he had come in but a minute before her, for he had not yet spoken of his business. He entered upon it now. Edina silently took off her things as she listened, put them on the side table, and made the tea. There he sat, talking methodically, and appearing to notice nothing, but in reality seeing all things: the poor and shabby room, the scanty attire of the young children, the faded appearance of Mrs. Raynor, as she sat, putting fresh cuffs on a worn jacket of Alfred's, the dry toast they were about to eat with their tea, lacking butter. Edina began to pour out the tea, and brought him a cup, handing him the sugar and milk.

"Is it cream?" asked Mr. Street.

"It is skim-milk," said Edina. "But it is very good: not watered. We get it at a small farmhouse."

He had come to ask Mrs. Raynor whether she remmebered a small ebony desk that was at Eagles' Nest. It had belonged to the late Mrs. Atkinson, he observed: she used to keep papers in it; receipts and things of that kind.

"I remember it quite well," replied Mrs. Raynor. "My husband took it into use, and kept papers of his own in it. He used to put all the bills there."

"Do you know what became of that desk, madam?"

"It was left in the house," said Mrs. Raynor.

"Ay: we supposed that it would be," nodded the banker. "But, madam, it cannot be found. I was at Eagles' Nest myself all day yesterday, searching for it. Mr. Fairfax says he does not remember to have seen it."

The name struck unfamiliarly on Mrs. Raynor's ear. "Mr. Fairfax! who is he?"

"The land steward, who lives in the house. He thinks that had the desk been there when he entered into possession, he should have noticed it."

"Is the desk particularly wanted?" interposed Edina, struck with the fact that he, the fully-occupied man of business, should have been down, searching for a whole day.

"We should be glad to find it," was the answer, as he turned again to Mrs. Raynor. "Lamb, the butler, who remained in the house for some two or three weeks after you quitted it, says he does not remember to have seen it there after you left. So, I procured your address from my brother, madam, and have come to question you."

Mrs. Raynor, who had put aside her work when Mr. Street entered, sat with her cup-and-saucer in her hand, and looked a little bewildered. He proceeded to explain further.

On the evening of Mr. George Atkinson's arrival in London—which had only taken place on Monday, the day Charles saw him in Mr. Preen's office—he and the banker were conversing together on various matters, as would naturally be the case after his long absence. Amid other subjects touched upon was that of the lost money and the vouchers for it: neither of which had ever been discovered. While recalling—both of them—in a desultory kind of way, all kinds of suppositious places in which these vouchers (if they existed) could have been placed, Mr. Atkinson suddenly asked whether the ebony desk had been well searched. Why of course it had, and all the other desks, was Mr. Street's answer. "Ay, but," said George Atkinson, "that ebony desk had a false bottom in which things might be concealed. I wonder I never thought of that before. I don't suppose the Raynors ever found that out; and I should not be much surprised if Mrs. Atkinson put the bonds in it, and if they are in it now."

Of course the suggestion was worth following up. Very especially worth it did it appear to Street the banker, who had a keen scent for money, whether of his own or other people's. He went down himself to Eagles' Nest to search the desk: but of the desk he could not find any traces. The land agent who had since occupied the house, Mr. Fairfax, did not remember to have seen anything of the kind. He next enquired after Lamb, the former butler, and heard that he was now living with Sir Philip Stane. To Sir Philip Stane's proceeded Mr. Street, and saw Lamb. Lamb said he knew the desk quite well; but he could not recollect seeing it after the Raynor family left, and he had no idea what became of it. It might have been there afterwards, he admitted, upon the point being pressed, and he not have noticed it: but still he thought he should have noticed it if it had been. Mr. Street quickly asked if he did not think he should have noticed its vacant place. Lamb replied that that ebony desk had no very particular place, for the Major was apt to carry it about with him, and to

leave it anywhere: and, he added, so very many small trifles belonging to the Raynors were taken away with them that the rooms hardly looked the same, and the absence of the desk would be less likely to be noticed by him. Mr. Street recognised the good sense of this, and felt baffled. He had now come down to question Mrs. Raynor.

"I wish, madam, I could hear that you had brought it away with you," he observed, the explanation over. A rather long one for curt-speaking Mr. Street to give.

"We should not be likely to bring it away," spoke poor Mrs. Raynor in her mild, meek voice. "We were told that we must not remove anything that had been Mrs. Atkinson's."

"True. Those instructions were issued by Mr. George Atkinson through me, madam."

"And I can assure you, sir, we did *not* remove anything," she replied, a little flurried. "All that we brought away belonged to us strictly. But I fancy Mr. George Atkinson must have been mistaken in supposing the bonds were in that desk. Had they been there, my husband could not have failed to see them."

"Did he know of the false bottom?"

"I am not aware that he did. But still—he so often used that desk. It frequently stood in the little room, atop of that low cabinet, or secrétaire. I have seen him turn it topsyturvy and shake all the papers out many a time, when searching for any bill he had mislaid."

"But that does not prove the bonds were not in the secret compartment," remarked the banker. "He could not shake out them. No, nor suspect that they were there."

"Did you know of this secret compartment?" enquired Edina, of the banker.

"I did not, Miss Raynor. Or you may be sure it would have been searched when we were first looking for the bonds. This desk George Atkinson himself brought from Ceylon the first time he went there, and gave it to Mrs. Atkinson. It was not, I believe, really of ebony, but of some black wood peculiar to the country; handsomely carved, as you no doubt remember. Mr. George Atkinson cannot imagine how it was he forgot that desk until now; but it had as completely slipped his memory, he says, as though it had never existed."

"I'm sure I wish it could be found!" spoke Mrs. Raynor. "It may be that the bonds are in it. That my husband never discovered the compartment you speak of, I feel sure. If he had, we should all have known it."

"And—just one last question, madam," said the banker, rising to depart. "Do you chance to remember in what room that desk was left when you quitted Eagles' Nest?"

Mrs. Raynor paused in thought; and then shook her head hopelessly. "No, I do not," she answered. "I know the desk must have

been left there, because we did not bring it away; but I have no especial recollection about it at all."

"We heard Mr. Atkinson was in London," remarked Edina, as she went with Mr. Street to the front door.

"For a few days only."

"For a few days only! When does he intend to enter into the possession of Eagles' Nest?"

"I cannot tell: he is an invalid just now," was the hurried answer, as if the banker did not care to be questioned. "Good day, Miss Raynor." And away he went with a brisk step.

Edina began to wash up the tea-things, wanting them away that she might get to some ironing. Her mind was busy; busy, and somewhat troubled. Reminiscences of George Atkinson, thoughts of the missing desk and of the lost bonds that it was perhaps hiding, kept rapidly chasing each other in her brain—and there seemed to be no comfort in any one of them.

"Had the desk been brought away from Eagles' Nest, I must have seen it," she remarked at length, but in a dubious tone, as if not feeling altogether sure of her assertion.

"But surely, Edina, you don't think we *should* bring it!" cried Mrs. Raynor, looking up from her work, which she had resumed—the mending of the jacket.

"Not intentionally, of course, Mary. The only chance of it would be if Charles, or anybody else, packed it up inadvertently."

"I am sure he did not," said Mrs. Raynor. "The desk was small, it is true, but he could not pack it up to bring away without knowing what it was, as one might a smaller parcel."

"The unpleasant thought that has occurred to me is this," explained Edina, pausing in her occupation to look at Mrs. Raynor. "If the desk, by any misadvertence, did come away from Eagles' Nest, it was burnt in the fire."

Down dropped Mrs. Raynor's work and her hands together. The words startled her. "Oh, Edina!"

Edina went on very gently with what she was doing, keeping silence. It was one of those uncomfortable ideas that try the mind: for they cannot be solved.

"Oh, I hope, I hope it did not come away," sighed Mrs. Raynor. "I do not think it did. What a dreadful thing—if those bonds were in it!"

"If one of you could but recollect absolutely the leaving of the desk at Eagles' Nest, it would be a great relief," said Edina.

"I know that desk," spoke up Kate, looking off the spelling lesson she was learning.

"Did you see it just before we left the house?" asked Mrs. Raynor in an eager, hopeful tone, catching at a straw.

Kate shook her head. "I don't think I did, mamma. I can't remember. I saw Frank empty all the papers out of it."

"Frank did?" cried Edina.

"Why yes; it was Frank who examined the desk," said Mrs. Raynor. "I now recollect that much. It was the morning of the day after the funeral. You were upstairs, Edina, helping to pack Daisy's things for London. I was crying about the money we owed, not knowing whether it was much or little, and Frank said we had better examine the bills. I told him the bills were most likely all in the little ebony desk—and he went to get them."

"I saw him do it," reiterated Kate. "I was in the little room with Mademoiselle Delrue; and he came and unlocked the desk, and shook all the papers out of it, and took them away with him."

"And what did he do with the desk?" asked Edina. "Did he leave it there?"

"I don't know. I think he took that away too."

"I wonder whether he would remember?" mused Edina. "Perhaps he put it somewhere for safety—in some cupboard, or closet?"

"Oh, perhaps he did," added Mrs. Raynor. "It is so very strange a thing where it can have got to. I—I—don't like that suggestion about the fire, Edina," she added in a whisper. "It seems to frighten me."

"Then, Mary, I am very sorry I mentioned it," replied Edina. "I may as well walk over to Frank's, and hear what his recollections are upon the subject," she added after a pause.

"But you must be so tired, Edina, after that walk to Bayswater."

"Not very. I had meant to iron the boys' collars and Charley's wristbands this evening, but I can do that to-morrow."

Mrs. Raynor offered no objection. The visit of the banker seemed to have saddened her, rather than cheered her—as so unusual a little change in the monotony of their home might have been expected to do. They all felt faint with their depressing prospects; sick, so to say, from want of hope. Were things to go on for life as they now were? It was a question they often asked themselves. And, for all they could see; for all the ray of opening that could be discerned; the answer given back was—Yes. Even Edina at times lost heart, and indulged in a good cry in secret.

Matters were not in a much better state at Frank Raynor's. It is true no poverty was there, no privation; but the old confidential happiness that existed between him and his wife had disappeared. Daisy was much changed. The once warm-hearted girl had become cold and silent, and frightfully apathetical. Her husband never caught a kindly look from her, or heard a loving tone. She did not complain. She did not reproach him. She did not find fault with any earthly thing. She just went through life in a dead kind of manner, as if all

interest in it had left her for ever. Frank put it down to their changed circumstances; to the living in the obscure manner they did live. Ever and anon he would essay to speak a word of hopeful expectation that things would be different sometime: but his wife never responded to it.

Steeped to the ears in the old miserable jealousy, was Mrs. Frank Raynor. All through this past year had she been nourishing it greedily. It had grown into a chronic ailment; it coloured her mind by day and her dreams by night. The most provoking feature of it all was, that she could not lay hold of any tangible proof of her husband's delinquency, anything very special to make a stir of: and how intensely aggravating that deficiency is to a jealous woman, let many a one confess. That her husband did go to Mrs. Bell's frequently, was indisputable: but then, as a set-off against that, stood the fact that he went in his professional capacity. No end of pills and potions were entered to Mrs. Bell's share in the physic book, and Daisy was therefore unable to assert that the plea for his visits was a pretence. But she believed it was. Once, chance had given her an opportunity of speaking of these visits. A very serious accident happened in the street just opposite their door, through the pranks of a vicious horse. Daisy saw it from the drawing-room window; saw the injured man brought into the surgery. She ran down to the parlour in distress. Frank was not at home. The boy flew one way to find him, Eve ran another: but Frank could not be found, and the poor senseless man had to be carried away elsewhere. "I'm very sorry," said Frank, when he returned, speaking rather carelessly; "I was at Mrs. Bell's." "You appear to be pretty often there," retorted Daisy, a rasping sound in her usually cold tone. "I go every two or three days," said he. And how much oftener, I wonder! thought Daisy: but she did not say it.

No, there was no open offence for her to lay hold of. What Daisy looked for was, to *see* her husband in the company of Rosaline. And this she could not get to see. Not once, during the whole past twelvemonth, had she seen them abroad together: the pleasant sight seemed specially to evade her eyes. She did not, so to say, watch Frank as at first, but she looked after him tolerably well; and she had not once been rewarded by the sight of Rosaline. Had that obnoxious individual been a myth, she could not have more completely hidden herself from her neighbours and from Daisy on a week-day. On Sundays Daisy generally saw her at church; the girl sat in a pew that was within view of Mr. Max Brown's. In that pew Rosaline would be, wearing her plain black silk gown; still, devout, seeming to notice nobody: had she been training for a nun, the world could not have appeared to possess less interest for her. Her black lace veil was never lifted from before her face: but it could not hide that face's beauty. Frank, when at church (which was not always), was on his good behaviour and did not

hasten to follow Rosaline out. In truth, he had not the opportunity afforded him ; for Rosaline seemed to glide away before anybody else stirred, and be lost to sight.

In this unsatisfactory manner the seasons had passed, Frank and his wife living in a cold, estranged atmosphere ; at tacit war with one another (at least *she* was) without any acknowledged cause.

On this same evening that was to witness Edina's visit, the West Indian mail had brought a letter to Frank from Mr. Max Brown. That roving individual wrote regularly once a month, all his letters being filled, more or less, with vague promises of his return. Vague, because no certain time was ever mentioned for it. Frank called for Eve to light the lamp, and stood by the fire in the little parlour while he read his letter. It was genial autumn weather, and very few people had taken to fires ; but Daisy seemed ever to feel chilly, and liked one lighted at dusk. People who live in a chronic state of discontent, fancy discomfort sometimes where none exists.

"He says he is really coming now, Daisy," cried Frank in a brisk tone as he looked over the letter. "Listen : 'I am now positively thinking of starting for home, and may be with you soon after the beginning of the new year. I know that you have thought my prolonged absence strange, but I will fully explain all in person. My mother is, I fear, sinking now !'"

Mrs. Frank Raynor made no reply or comment of any kind. For days together she would not speak to her husband, except when anything he might say absolutely demanded an answer.

"And when Brown comes, we shall have to leave," went on Frank. "You will be glad of it, I am sure."

"I don't care whether we leave or not," was the ungracious retort.

And she did not seem to care. Life, for her, had lost its sweetness. Nay, she probably would prefer, of the two, to remain where she was : if away, she could no longer look after her husband's movements.

"I shall be at liberty, once Brown is here to take to his own practice," continued Frank ; "and I will try to place you in a more genial atmosphere than this. I know you have felt it keenly, Daisy, and are feeling it still ; but I have not been able to help myself."

His tone was considerately tender ; he stooped unexpectedly and kissed her forehead. Daisy gave no answering kiss : she just passively endured the caress, and that was all. Frank carried his letter into the surgery, where a great portion of his home time was passed.

His thoughts were far away. Would Mr. Blase Pellet tolerate this anticipated removal of his when it came ?—would he, so to say, *permit it ?* Or, would he not rather dodge Frank's footsteps and establish himself in some other chemist's shop where he could still hold him in view ? Yes : Frank felt certain that he would. Unconscious though Frank was of his wife's supervision, he felt persuaded in his mind that he was

subjected to that of Blase Pellet. It was not, in one sense of the word, an offensive supervision; for not once in three months did he and Pellet come into contact: but Frank felt always just like a man chained—who can go as far as the chain allows him, but no farther. With all his heart he wished that he could better his position for Daisy's sake; had long wished it; but in his sense of thraldom he had been contented to let things go on as they were going, dreading any attempt at change. Over and over again had he felt thankful for the prolonged wanderings of Mr. Max Brown, which afforded him the necessary plea for putting up with his present lot.

Daisy sat on with her discontented face. A very pretty face yet; prettier, if anything, than of yore; with the clear eyes and their amber light, and the delicate bloom on the lovely features, and the sunny, luxuriant hair. She always dressed daintily, wishing in her secret heart, in spite of her resentment, to win her husband back. This evening she wore a dark blue silk, one of the remnants of better days, with a bit of rich white falling lace at the throat, on which a gold locket, attached to its thin chain, rested. Very, very pretty did Edina think her when she arrived, and was brought into the room by Frank.

"You never come to see me," began Daisy with unnecessary complaint. "I might be dead and buried, for all you or anybody else would know, Edina."

"Ah no, Margaret," was Edina's answer. "Not while you have your good husband at your side. If you really needed us, he would take care that we should know it."

"All the same, everybody neglects me," returned Daisy. "I'm glad you thought of me at last."

"I came this evening for a certain purpose," said Edina: who would not urge in excuse the very little time she had to give to visiting, for Daisy must know it quite well. And she forthwith, untying her bonnet-strings, told Frank of Mr. Street's visit, of its purport, and of their own conjectures at Laurel Cottage after the banker had departed.

"Why yes, it was I who emptied the ebony desk," said Frank. "A false bottom! I really can't believe it, Edina. Some of us would not have failed to find it out."

"We cannot doubt what Mr. Street says. He did not know of it himself, you hear, until Mr. George Atkinson spoke of it."

"If there was anything of the kind—well, yes, I suppose there must have been, as Atkinson says it," rejoined Frank. "But why in the world did not Atkinson speak of it before? When he was last in England, the hiding-place of these bonds was being hunted for, high and low—or had been hunted for, not long before."

"He says, I tell you, that he cannot imagine how it was it did not occur to him to ask whether the desk had been searched. I

should imagine," added Edina, "that he would not suppose but what the secret compartment was known, and took its search for granted. But, Frank, we cannot remedy the forgetfulness if we talk of it for ever: what I want to ascertain from you is, whether you remember where you left the desk."

"No, that I don't. I remember turning the bills and papers out of it wholesale, and carrying them into the room where Mrs. Raynor was sitting. As to the desk, I suppose it remained upon the table."

"You are sure you emptied it of all the papers?"

"Sure and certain," replied Frank in his usual light, gay manner. "I remember that much. I turned the desk upside down and shook the papers out, and afterwards passed my hand inside to be satisfied that none remained."

"Kate says she saw you do it. But she does not recollect what became of the desk."

"Neither do I recollect. Except that the desk was left in the room. I daresay it was still there when the rest of you came away."

"The great fear on our minds is, whether it was packed inadvertently, and brought up with the rest of the luggage. If so, it was burnt with that."

"Not likely, Edina. Nobody could pack up that desk inadvertently."

"A servant might. I expect a great deal of the packing was left to the servants."

"Sure to have been," acknowledged Frank readily.

"Well—and there it is," concluded Edina. "I think the probability is that the desk was put up by the servants and was brought away. If it had remained at Eagles' Nest, it would no doubt be there now."

"Then I suppose they will never find the lost money as long as oak and ash grow; wanting the bonds to furnish the clue to it," observed Frank. "It is a very unsatisfactory thing. George Atkinson should have remembered to speak in time."

He was called into the surgery with the last words, being wanted there. Edina began to re-tie her bonnet strings. Daisy had picked up some crochet-work.

"Why don't you take your bonnet off, Edina, and stay?"

"Because I must go home, dear."

"Not before you have had some supper.—Not stay for it! Why can't you stay?"

"I do not like going back so late."

"As if anybody would hurt you!"

"I do not fear they would. But I am not London bred, you know, Margaret, and cannot quite overcome my feeling of dislike to London streets at night."

"Oh, very well. Nobody cares to be with me now."

Edina looked at her. It was not the first indication by several that Mrs. Frank Raynor had given of a spirit of discontent.

"Will you tell me what it is that is troubling you, Margaret? Something is, I know."

"How do you know it?"

"Because I perceive it. I detect it every time I see you."

"Then it's nothing," returned Daisy—who would not have spoken of her jealousy for the world. "That is, nothing that anybody could help, or hinder."

"My dear," said Edina, bending nearer to her, her sweet voice and loving tone sounding like pleasant music, "that some grievance or other is especially trying you, I think I cannot mistake. But oh, remember one thing, and take comfort. In the very brightest and happiest lot, lurks always some canker. Each rose, however lovely, must have its thorn. We ought not, in the interest of our true welfare, to wish it otherwise. God sends the clouds, Margaret, as well as the sunshine. He will take care of you while the trouble lasts, if you only bear patiently and put yourself under His shelter; and He will bring you out of the trouble in His own good time. *Trust to Him*, my dear, for He is a sure refuge."

And when Edina had left, Frank walking a little way with her through the more obscure streets, Daisy burst into tears, and sobbed bitterly. The indulgence of this jealousy might be very gratifying to her temper; but it had lasted long, making her at times feel low and ill and weak.

"If God cared for me He would punish that Rosaline Bell," was her comment on Edina's words. "Lay her up with a broken leg, or something."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNDER THE CHURCH WALLS.

"No, I cannot buy the bonnet unless you will make the alteration at once. Now: so that I may take it home with me in the carriage."

The speaker was Mrs. Townley. Daisy was spending the day with her in Westbourne Terrace, and they had come abroad, shopping. Mrs. Townley had fallen in love with a bonnet she saw in a milliner's window in Oxford Street; she entered the shop and offered to buy the bonnet, subject to some alteration. The mistress and proprietor seemed rather unwilling to make it.

"I assure you, madam, it looks better as it is," she urged. "If we substitute blue flowers for these grey ones and carry the side higher, it will take away all its style at once."

The assurance somewhat shook Mrs. Townley. If there was one

thing she went in for, above all else, it was "style." But she liked to have her own way also, and depended much upon her own taste.

"Three parts of these milliners object to any suggested alteration only to save themselves trouble," she said aside to Daisy. "Don't you think it would look best as I propose?"

"I hardly know," replied Daisy. "If we could see the alteration first, we might be able to judge."

But, to make the change, unless the bonnet was first bought, Madame François (her name, as it appeared on the door plate) absolutely refused. Of course she would alter it, she said, if Madam insisted after purchasing the bonnet; but she must again express her opinion that it would spoil the style.

The discussion was carried on with animation, Madame's native tongue being decidedly English, in spite of her name. Mrs. Townley still urged her own opinion, but not very strenuously; for she felt rather doubtful, and would not have risked losing the "style" for the world.

"I will call my head milliner," said Madame at length. "Her taste is very superior. Mam'selle, go and ask Miss Bell to step here."

Mam'selle—a young person, evidently French—left her place behind the counter and went into another room. Every pulse in Daisy's body seemed to go tingling to her fingers' ends when she came back with Rosaline. Quiet, self-contained, without a smile on her face to tell of any gladness of heart there might be within, Rosaline gave her opinion when the case was submitted to her. She took the bonnet in her hand, and kept it there for a minute, or so, looking at it.

"I think, madame," she said to her mistress, "that if some grey flowers of a lighter shade were substituted for these, it would be prettier. Blue flowers would spoil the bonnet. As to the side, it certainly ought not to be carried higher. It is the right height as it is."

"Then take it, and change the flowers at once, Miss Bell," said Madame, upon Mrs. Townley's signifying her assent to the suggestion. "The lady will wait.—Miss Bell's taste is always to be depended upon," added Madame, as Rosaline went away with the bonnet.

"How extremely good-looking she is!" exclaimed Mrs. Townley: who had never seen Rosaline before, and of course knew nothing about her. "Quite beautiful."

"Yes," assented Madame. "When I engaged her I intended her to be in this front room and wait on customers; for beauty does attract, there's no denying it. But Miss Bell refused, point blank: she had come to be in my work-room, she said, not to serve. Had I insisted, she would have left."

"Is she respectable?"

The question was interposed by Daisy. Swelling with all kinds of resentful and bitter feelings, she had allowed her tongue to get the

better of her discretion ; and the next moment felt ashamed of herself. Madame François did not like it at all.

"Res-pect-able!" she echoed with unnecessary deliberation. "I do not understand the question, madam."

Daisy flushed crimson. Mrs. Townley had also turned a surprised look upon her sister.

"Miss Bell is one of the best-conducted young persons I ever knew," pursued Madame. "Steady and quiet in manner always, as you saw her now. She is very superior indeed ; quite a lady in her ways and thoughts. Before she came to me, nearly two years ago, she had a business of her own down in Cornwall. That is, her aunt had ; and Miss Bell was with her."

"She looks very superior indeed, to me," said Mrs. Townley, wishing to smooth away her sister's uncalled-for remark : "she has a nice tone of speech.—Have you any dentelle de Paris ?"

The bonnet soon reappeared : but it was not brought by Rosaline. Mrs. Townley chose some lace ; paid the bill, and left. As Daisy followed her sister into the carriage, her mind in a very unpleasant whirl, she knew that that matter which had puzzled her—the never seeing her husband abroad with Rosaline—was now explained. Rosaline was at this place by day ; but, she supposed, at home at night.

It was so. The reader may remember that one evening when Frank went in to see dame Bell soon after she came to London, she had told him that Rosaline had gone to Oxford Street on some mysterious errand : mysterious, in so far as that Rose had not disclosed to her what she went for. The fact was, that Rosaline had then gone to this very milliner's by appointment, having procured a letter of introduction to her from a house of business in Falmouth, with the view of tendering her services. For she knew that her mother's income was too small to live on comfortably, and it would be a good thing if she could increase it. Madame François, pleased with her appearance and satisfied with the letter she brought, engaged her at once. Rosaline had been there ever since : going up in a morning and returning home at night. The milliner had wished her to be entirely in the house, but she could not leave her mother.

On this day, as usual, Rosaline sat at her work in the back room, planning out new bonnets—that would be displayed in the window as "the latest fashion : just from Paris"—and directing the young women under her. That she had a wonderful aptitude and innate taste for the work, was recognised by all who saw her engaged in it, and Madame François had speedily made her the superintendent. The girl, as Madame thought, always seemed to have some grievous weight of care upon her : when questioned upon the point, Rosaline would answer that she was uneasy respecting the decaying health of her mother.

More thoughtful than usual, more buried in the inward life, for the

appearance of Mrs. Frank Raynor, whom she knew by sight, had brought back old reminiscences of Trennach, Rosaline sat at her employment this day until it was completed, and the hours of labour had passed. Generally speaking she went home by omnibus, but she sometimes walked. As she did on this evening; for it was a mild and pleasant one, and somehow she felt in great need of the fresh air. So that it was tolerably late when she got in, close upon half-past nine.

The first thing to be noticed was, that her mother's chair was empty. As was the room. Rosaline passed quickly into the bed-chamber, and saw that her mother had undressed and was in bed.

"Why, mother! what's this for? Are you not well?"

"Not very," sighed the dame. "Your supper is ready for you on the table, Rose."

"Never mind my supper, mother," replied Rose, snuffing the candle, and putting two or three things to rights in the room generally, after taking off her bonnet. "Tell me what it is that's the matter with you. Do you feel worse?"

"Not much—that I know of," was the answer. "But I got weary, and thought I should be better in bed. For the past week, or more, I can't get your poor father out of my head, Rose: up or abed, he's always worrying me."

"But you know, mother, this cannot do you any good—as I have said," cried Rosaline in a stifled tone: for she had heard the same complaint once or twice lately.

"What troubles me is this, child—how did he come by his death? That's the question I've wanted answered all along: and now it seems never to leave me."

Rosaline drooped her head. No one but herself knew how terribly the subject tried her.

"Blase Pellet called in at dusk for a minute or two to see how I got on," resumed Mrs. Bell. "When I told him how poor Bell had been haunting my mind lately, and how much the prolonged mystery of his fate seemed to press upon me, he nodded his head like a bobbing image. 'I want to know how he came by his death,' I said to him; 'I'm always wanting it?' 'I could tell, if I chose,' said he, speaking up quick. 'Then why don't you tell? I insist upon your telling,' I answered as quick as he. Upon that, he drew in, and declared he had meant nothing. But it's not the first time he has thrown out these hints, Rosaline."

"He is a dangerous man," spoke Rosaline, her voice trembling with passion. "He could be a dangerous enemy."

"Well, I don't see why you should say that, Rose. He is neither your enemy nor mine. But I should like to know what reason he has for saying these things."

"Don't listen to him, mother; don't encourage him here," implored

Rosaline. "I'm sure it will be better for our peace that he should keep his distance. And now—will you have some arrowroot to-night, or——"

"I won't have anything," interrupted Dame Bell. "I had a bit of supper before I undressed and a sup of ale with it. I shall get to sleep if I can: and I hope with all my heart that your poor father won't be coming to me in my dreams."

Rosaline, as bidden, carried away the candle, and sat down to her own supper in the next room. But she could not eat. Mr. Blase Pellet's reported words were quite enough supper for her. Would this state of semi-thraldom in which she lived ever cease, she asked herself: would she ever again, as long as the world should last, know an hour that was not tinged with its fatal remembrances?

In the morning her mother said she was better, and got up as usual. This was Saturday. When Rosaline reached home in the afternoon, earlier than on other days, she found her stirring about at some active housework. But on the Sunday morning she lay in bed, confessing that she felt but poorly. Rosaline wanted to call in Mr. Raynor: but her mother told her not to be silly; she was not ill enough for that.

The inward disorder which afflicted Mrs. Bell, and would eventually be her death, was making silent progress, sure if slow. Frank Raynor —and his experience was pretty extensive now—had never known a similar case develop itself so lingeringly. He thought she might have a year or two's life in her yet.

On this Sunday afternoon, when she and Rosaline were sitting together after dinner, Mr. Blase Pellet walked in. Rosaline only wished she could walk out. Rather than endure his company, she would have been glad to do it. But she forced herself to be civil to him.

"Look here," said Blase, pulling a newspaper out of his pocket when he had sat some minutes. "This advertisement must concern those Raynors that you know of. I'll read it to you."

"'Lost. A small black carved desk that has the appearance of ebony. Was last seen at Eagles' Nest in the month of June, more than two years ago. Anybody giving information of where it may be found, or bringing it to Mr. Street, solicitor, of Lawyers' Row, shall receive ten guineas reward.'

"Those Raynors, you know, came into that Eagles' Nest property, and then had to turn out of it again," added Blase.

"Ten guineas reward for an ebony desk!" commented Mrs. Bell. "I wonder what was in it?"

Blase did not get an invitation to stay for tea this afternoon, though he probably expected it. However, he was not one to intrude unwished for, and took his departure.

"I had a great mind to ask him what he meant by the remark he

made the other evening about your poor father," said Mrs. Bell to Rosaline as he went out.

"Oh, mother, let it be!" exclaimed Rosaline in a piteous tone, her pale face changing to hectic. "He cannot know anything that would bring peace to you or to me."

"Well, I should like my tea now," said Dame Bell. "And I'd have asked him to stay, Rose, but for your ungracious looks."

Rosaline busied herself in getting the tea: which they took nearly in silence. While putting the things away in the cupboard afterwards, Rosaline made some remark: which was not answered. Supposing her mother did not hear, she spoke again. Still there came no reply, and Rose looked round. Dame Bell was lying back on the sofa, apparently insensible.

"It was the pain, child," she breathed, when Rosaline had revived her; but she had not quite fainted; "the sharp, sudden pain here. I never had it, I think, as bad as that."

Like a ghost she was still, with a pinched look in her face. Rosaline was frightened. Without telling her mother, she wrote a hasty line to Frank, to ask if he would please to come round, twisted it up three-corner fashion, and sent it by the landlady's daughter.

The note arrived just as Frank Raynor and his wife were beginning to think of setting out for evening service. Frank chanced to have gone into a small back room near the kitchen, where he kept his store of drugs, and Daisy was alone when Sam came in, the note held between his fingers.

"For master, please, ma'am; and it is to be give to him directly."

With an impatient word—for Daisy knew what these hastily-written, unsealed missives generally meant, and she did not care to go to church at night alone—she untwisted it, and read the contents.

"Dear Mr. Raynor,—If you could possibly come round this evening, I should be very much obliged to you. My mother has been taken suddenly worse, and I do not like her looks at all. Very truly yours, R. B."

"The shameless thing!" broke forth Mrs. Frank Raynor, in her rising passion. "She writes to him exactly as if she were his equal!"

Folding the paper in its twists again, she threw it on the table, and went upstairs to put her bonnet on. It did not take her long: when people are in these moods their fingers are apt to be as quick as their temper. Frank was only returning to the parlour as she went down.

"Oh," said he, opening the note and reading it, "then I can't go with you to-night, Daisy. I am called out."

No answer.

"I will take you to the church door and leave you there," added he, pitching the note into the fire.

"Of course you could not stay the service with me and attend to your patient afterwards!" cried Daisy, not seeking to suppress the sarcasm in her tone.

"No, I cannot do that. It is Mrs. Bell I am called to."

"Oh! Of all people *she* must not be neglected."

"Right, Daisy. I would neglect the whole list of patients rather than Mrs. Bell."

He spoke on impulse, pained by her looks and tone. But, had he taken time for thought, he would not have avowed so much. The avowal meant nothing—at least, in the sense that Daisy gave to it. But for him, Francis Raynor, Mrs. Bell's husband might have been alive now. This lay on his conscience, and rendered him doubly solicitous for the poor widow. To Frank it had always seemed that she, in a degree, had belonged to him since that fatal night.

But Daisy knew nothing of this; and the impression made upon her by the words was unfortunate, for she could only see matters through her own distorted view. It was for Rosaline's sake he was anxious for the mother, reasoned her mind, and it had now come to the shameful pass that he hesitated not to declare it—to declare it to her, his wife! Perhaps, even, the woman was not ill—the girl had resorted to this ruse that they might spend an evening together!

She kept her face, its flashing eyes, its burning cheeks, turned to the fire, lest he should see her agitation: she pressed her hands upon her chest, to still its laboured breath. Frank was putting his overcoat on, for it was a cool night, and noticed nothing. Thus they started: Daisy refusing to take his arm, on the plea of holding up her dress; refusing to let him carry her prayer-book; giving no reply to the remark or two he made. The church bells were chiming, the stars twinkled brightly in the frosty sky.

Under the silence and gloom of the church walls, away from the lights inside and out, Frank stopped, and laid his hand upon his wife's.

"You are vexed, Daisy, because I cannot go to church: but when my patients really require me I must not and will not neglect them. For a long while now you have seemed to live in a state of perpetual discontent—of resentment against me. What the cause is, I know not. I do not give you any, so far as I am aware. If it is that you are dissatisfied with our present position—and I am not surprised that you should be so—I can only say how much for your sake I regret that I cannot alter it. But that is what I am not yet able to do: and to find it constantly vented upon me is hard to bear. Let us, rather, try to hope for better days, and cheer on one another."

He wrung her hand with a sharp pressure, and turned away. The tone of his voice had been so loving and tender, and yet so full of pain, that Daisy found her eyes wet with sudden tears. She went into church.

What with the bitter resentment against her husband, her own strong sense of misery, and this softened mood, life seemed very sad to her that night.

And as the service proceeded, and the soothing tones of the sweet chant chosen for the *Magnificat* fell on her ear and heart, the softened mood grew more softened. Daisy cried in her lonely pew. Hiding her face when she knelt, she let the tears rain down. A vision came over her of a possible future: of Frank's love restored to her as by some miracle; of Rosaline Bell and these wretched troubles done with, lost in the memory of the past; of the world being fair for them again, and she and her husband walking hand in hand in it, down the stream of time. Poor Daisy let her veil fall when she rose, that her swollen eyes should not be seen.

And the sermon soothed her too. The text soothed her. It was one that she especially loved: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Daisy thought none had ever been so heavily laden before as she was: just as the lightly chastened are apt to think.

"If I can but be a little more pleasant with him, and have patience," said she to herself, "who knows but things will work round again."

But the heart of man is rebellious, as all the world knows; very especially rebellious is that of woman. The trouble to which Mrs. Frank Raynor was subjected might bear precious fruit in the future, but it was not effecting much good in the present. No sooner was she out of church, and the sound of the parson's impressive voice and of the sweet singing had faded away on her ear, than all the old rancour of spirit came rushing up to the surface again.

"I wonder if he is there still?" she thought. "Most likely. I wish I could find out!"

Instead of bending her steps homewards, she turned them towards Mark Street, and paced twice before the house that contained Dame Bell and her daughter. A light shone behind the white blind of the window, indicating the probability that the room had inmates; but Daisy could not see who they were. She turned towards home, and had nearly reached it when Frank came hastily out of the surgery, a bottle of medicine in his hand.

"Is it you, Daisy? I began to think you were late. I meant to come to the church and fetch you, but found I could not."

"Shall I walk with you?" asked Daisy, trying to commence the carrying-out of the good resolutions she had made in church, and perhaps somewhat mollified by his words. "It is a fine night."

For answer he took her hand, and placed it within his arm. Ah, never would there have been a better husband than Frank Raynor, if she had but met him kindly.

"Who is the medicine for?" asked Daisy.

"For Dame Bell. I am walking fast, Daisy, but she ought to have it without delay."

"Have you been with her all this time?"

"Yes. I was coming away when she had a kind of fainting fit, the second to-day; and it took more than half an hour to get her round."

"She is really ill, then?"

"Really ill!" echoed Frank in surprise. "Why, Daisy, she is dying. I do not mean dying to-night," he added; "or likely to die immediately; but that which she is suffering from will gradually kill her. My uncle suspected from the first what it would turn out to be."

Daisy said no more, and the house was gained. As Frank rang the bell, she left his arm and went a few steps away; beyond sight of any one who might open the door, but not of hearing any conversation that might take place.

It was Rosaline who appeared. Frank put the bottle into her hand.

"I brought it round myself, Rosaline, that I might be sure it came quickly. Has there been another fainting fit?"

"No, not another, Mr. Frank," replied Rosaline. "She is in bed now and seems very quiet."

"Well, give her a dose of this without delay."

"Very well, sir. I—I wish you would tell me the truth, Mr. Frank," she went on in a somewhat agitated voice.

"The truth of what?"

"Whether she is much worse? Dangerously so."

"No, I assure you she is not: not materially so, if you mean that. Of course—as you know yourself, Rosaline, or I should not speak of it to you—she will get worse and worse with time."

"I do know it, sir, unfortunately."

"But the decay will be very gradual: neither sudden nor alarming. This evening's weakness seems to me to be quite exceptional. She must have been either exerting or exciting herself: I said so upstairs."

"True. It is excitement. But I did not like to say so before her. For the past few days she has been complaining that my father worries her," continued Rosaline, dropping her voice to a low key. "She says he seems to be in her mind night and day: asleep she dreams of him, awake she dwells on him. And oh, what a dreadful thing it all is!"

"Hush, Rosaline!" whispered Frank in the like cautious tone: and as Daisy's ears could not catch the conversation now, she of course thought the more. "The fancy will subside. At times, you know, she has had it before."

"Blase Pellet excites her. I know he does. Only the other day he said something or other."

"I wish Blase Pellet was transported!" cried Frank quickly. "But it—it cannot be helped, Rosaline. Give your mother half a wine-glass of this mixture at once."

"I am so much obliged to you for all, sir," she gently said, as he shook hands with her. "Oh, and I beg your pardon for asking another question," she added as he was turning away. "I have been thinking that I ought perhaps to leave my situation and stay at home with my mother. I always meant to do so when she grew worse. Do you see any necessity for it?"

"Not yet. Later of course you must do it: and perhaps it might be as well that you should be at home to-morrow, though the people of the house are attentive to her. You may rely upon me to tell you when the necessity comes."

"Thank you, Mr. Frank. Good night."

"Good night, Rose."

Frank held out his arm to his wife. She took it, and they walked home together. But this time she was very chary in answering any remark he made, and did not herself volunteer one. The interview she had just been a witness to had only served to augment the sense of treason that filled the heart of Mrs. Frank Raynor.

(*To be continued.*)

PURPLES OF THE DALE.

O, the dewy crowfoot purples! how they tapestried the green,
As we gathered up their beauty, she and I,
Where olive velvet beech-buds burst in thousands from their screen,
And birch-boles were all silver in the early morning sheen,
And Allie's golden braids shone like the crown upon a queen.
"O, love!" I whispered, "light should never die,
Light fresh as this, blue rippling on the sky,
And dancing o'er these purples till they dry!"

O, the dewy crowfoot purples! on sweet Allie's wedding-day,
They shall hang within the porch she passes through;
She will see them, and remember those that tapestried our way,
When we gathered up their beauty in the sheeny morning ray,
Whilst the bursting velvet beech-buds laughed defiance to decay.
"O, love!" I'll whisper, "read my token true,
As sunlight dries wet flowers beneath the blue,
So love's pure light dries alway sorrow's dew!"

JANE DIXON.

ANNE.

II.

"JOHNNY, what can I do? What do you *think* I can do?"

In the pretty grey silk that she had worn at her father's wedding, and with a whole world of perplexity in her soft brown eyes, Anne Lewis stood by me, and whispered the question. As soon as the bride and bridegroom had driven off, Anne was to depart for Maythorn Bank, with Julia and Fanny Podd; all three of them to remain there for the few days that Dr. and Mrs. Lewis purposed to be away. But now, no sooner had the sound of the bridal wheels died on our ears, and Anne had suggested that they should get ready for their journey home, than the two young ladies burst into a laugh, and said, *Did* she think they were going off to that dead-and-alive place! Not if they knew it. And, giving her an emphatic nod to prove they meant what they said, they waltzed to the other end of the room in their shining pink dresses to talk to Mr. Angerstyne.

Consternation sat in every line of Anne's face. "I cannot go there by myself, or stay there by myself," she said to me. "These things are not done in France."

No: though Maythorn Bank was her own home, and though she was as thoroughly English as a girl can be, it could not be done. French customs and ideas did not permit it, and she had been brought up in them. It was certainly not nice behaviour of the girls. They should have objected before their mother left.

"*I* don't know what you can do, Anne. Better ask Miss Dinah."

"Not go with you, after the arrangements are made—and your servant Sally is expecting you all" cried Miss Dinah Lake. "Oh, you must be mistaken," she added; and went up to talk to them. Julia only laughed.

"Go to be buried alive at Maythorn Bank as long as mamma chooses to stay away!" she cried. "You'll not get either of us to do anything of the kind, Miss Dinah."

"Mrs. Podd—I mean Mrs. Lewis—will be back to join you there in less than a week," said Miss Dinah.

"Oh, will she, though! You don't know mamma. She may be off to Paris and fifty other places, before she turns her head homewards again. Anne Lewis can go home by herself if she wants to go: I and Fanny mean to stay with you, Miss Dinah."

So Anne had to stay also. She sat down and wrote two letters: one to Sally, saying their coming home was delayed; the other to Dr. Lewis, asking what she was to do.

"And the gain is mine," observed Mr. Angerstyne. "What would the house have been without you?"

He appeared to speak to the girls generally. But his eyes and his smile evidently were directed to Anne. She saw it too, and blushed. Blushed! when she had not yet known him four-and-twenty hours. But he was just the fellow for a girl to fall in love with—and no disparagement to her to say so.

"Who is he?" I that evening asked Miss Dinah.

"A Mr. Henry Angerstyne," she answered. "I don't know much of him, except that he is an independent gentleman with a beautiful estate in Essex and a fashionable man. I see what you are thinking, Johnny: that is curious a man of wealth and fashion should be staying at Lake's boarding-house. But Mr. Angerstyne came over from Malvern to see Captain Bristow, the old invalid, who keeps his room upstairs, and when here the Captain persuaded him to stay for a day or two, if we could give him a room. That's how it was. Captain Bristow leaves us soon, and I suppose Mr. Angerstyne will be leaving too."

I had expected to go home the following day; but that night up came two of the young Sankers, Dan and King, and said I was to go and stay with them. Leave to do so was easily had from home; for just as our school at old Frost's was re-assembling, two boys who had stayed the holidays were taken with bad throats, and we were not to go back till goodness knew when. Tod, who was on a visit in Gloucestershire, thought it would be Michaelmas.

Back came letters from Cheltenham. Mrs. Lewis told her girls they might remain at Worcester if they liked. And Dr. Lewis wrote to Anne, saying she must not go home alone, and he enclosed a note to Mrs. Lake, asking her to be so kind as to take care of his daughter.

After that we had a jolly time. The Sankers and Lakes amalgamated well, and were always at one another's houses. This does not apply to Mrs. Lake and Miss Dinah: as Miss Dinah put it, they had no time for gadding down to Sankers'. But Mr. Angerstyne (who had not left) grew quite familiar there, the Sankers, who never stood on the slightest ceremony, making no stranger of him. Captain Sanker discovered that two or three former military chums of his were known to Mr. Angerstyne; one dead old gentleman in particular, who had been his bosom friend. This was quite enough. Mr. Angerstyne had, so to say, the key of the house given him, and went in and out of it at will.

Everybody liked Mr. Angerstyne. And for all the pleasurable excursions that fell to our lot, we were indebted to him. Without being ostentatious, he opened his purse freely; and there was a delicacy in his manner of doing it that prevented its being felt. On

the plea of wanting, himself, to see some noted spot or place in the neighbourhood, he would order a large post-carriage from the Star or the Crown, and invite as many as it would hold to accompany him, and bring baskets of choice fruit, or dainties from the pastry-cook's to regale us on. Or he would tell the Sankers that King looked delicate: poor lame King, who was to die ere another year had flown. Down would come the carriage, ostensibly to take King for a drive; and a lot of us reaped the benefit. Mrs. Sanker was always of the party: without a chaperone, the young ladies could not have gone. Generally speaking the Miss Podds would come: *they* took care of that: and Anne Lewis always came; which I think Mr. Angerstyne took care of. The golden page of life was opening for Anne Lewis: she seemed to be entering on a pathway of flowers, that could lead only through Elysium.

One day we went to Holt Fleet. The carriage came down to the Sankers' in the morning, Mr. Angerstyne in it, and the Captain stepped out, his face beaming, to see the start. Once in a way he would be of the party himself, but not often. Mr. Angerstyne handed Mrs. Sanker in, and then called out for me. I held back, feeling uncomfortable at being always taken, and knowing that Fred and Dan thought me selfish for it. But it was of no use: Mr. Angerstyne had a way of carrying out his own will.

"Get up on the box, Johnny," he said to me. And, close upon my heels, wanting to share the box with me, came Dan Sanker. Mr. Angerstyne pulled him back.

"Not you, Dan. I shall take King."

"King has been ever so many times—little wretch!" grumbled Dan. "It's my turn. It's not fair, Mr. Angerstyne."

"You, Dan, and Fred, and Toby, all the lot of you, shall have a carriage to yourselves for a whole day if you like, but King goes with me," said Mr. Angerstyne, helping the lad up.

He got in himself, took his seat by Mrs. Sanker, and the post-boy touched up his horses. Mrs. Sanker, mildly delighted, for she liked these drives, sat in her ordinary costume: a fancy shawl of some thick kind of silk crape, all the colours of the rainbow blended into its pattern, and a black velvet bonnet with a turned-up brim and a rose in it, beneath which her light hair hung down in loose curls.

We stopped at Lake's boarding-house to take up the three girls, who got in, and sat on the seat opposite Mrs. Sanker and Mr. Angerstyne, and then the post-boy started for Holt Fleet. "The place is nothing," observed Captain Sanker, who had suggested it as an easy, pleasant drive, to Mr. Angerstyne; "but the inn is comfortable, and the garden's nice to sit or stroll in."

We reached Holt Fleet at one o'clock. The first thing Mr. Angerstyne did was to order luncheon, anything they could conveniently

give us, and to serve it in the garden. It proved to be ham and eggs; first-rate; we were all hungry, and he bade them keep on frying till further orders. At which the girl who waited on us laughed, as she drew the corks of some bottled perry.

I saw a bit of by-play later. Strolling about to digest the ham and eggs, some in one part of the grounds, which in places had a wild and picturesque aspect, some in another, Mr. Angerstyne suddenly laid hold of Anne, as if to save her from falling. She was standing in that high narrow pathway that is perched up aloft and looks so dangerous, steadying herself by a tree, and bending cautiously forwards to look down. The path may be gone now. The features of the whole place may be altered; perhaps even done away with altogether; for I am writing of years and years ago. He stole up and caught her by the waist.

"Oh, Mr. Angerstyne!" she exclaimed, blushing and starting.

"Were you going to take a leap?"

"No, no," she smiled. "Would it kill me if I did?"

"Suppose I let you go—and send you over to try it?"

Ah, he would not do that. He was holding her all too safely. Anne made an effort to free herself; but her eyelids drooped over her tell-tale eyes, her all conscious face betrayed what his presence was to her.

"How beautiful the river is from this, as we look up it!" she exclaimed.

"More than beautiful."

Julia Podd rushed up to mar the harmony. Never does a fleeting moment of this kind set in but somebody does mar it. Julia flirted desperately with Mr. Angerstyne.

As the days went on, there could be no mistake made by the one or two of us who kept our eyes open. I mean, as to Mr. Angerstyne's liking for Anne Lewis, and the reciprocal feelings he had awakened. With her, it had been a case of love at first sight; or nearly so. And that, if you may believe the learned in the matter, is the only love deserving the name. Perhaps it had been so with him: I don't know.

Three parts of their time they talked together in French, for Mr. Angerstyne spoke it well. And that vexed Julia and Fanny Podd, who called themselves good French scholars, but who somehow failed to understand. "They talk so fast; they do it on purpose," grumbled Fanny.

That a fine gentleman and a man of the great world should stay dawdling on at a boarding-house, puzzled Miss Dinah, who knew what was what. But of course it was no business of hers; she and Mrs. Lake were only too glad to have one who paid so liberally. Twice a week regularly he went over to Malvern for the day, sometimes getting back in time for dinner, sometimes not.

The college school had begun again, and I was back at Lake's. For Tom and Alfred Lake were at home now; and nothing would do but I must come to their house before I went home—to which I was daily expecting a summons. As to the bride and bridegroom, they probably meant to remain away for good; weeks had elapsed since their departure. Nobody regretted that: Julia and Fanny Podd considered Maythorn Bank the fag-end of the world, and hoped they might never be called to it. As to Anne—who, living in the Elysian Fields, would care to exchange them for the dreary land outside their borders?

One evening we were invited to a tea-dinner at Captain Sanker's. The Miss Podds persisted in calling it a soirée. It turned out to be a scrambling kind of entertainment, and must have amused Mr. Angerstyne. Biddy had poured the bowl of sweet custard over the meat patties by mistake, and put salt on the open tartlets in place of sugar.

The evening, with its mistakes, and its fun, and its laughter, and its genuine hospitality, came to an end, and we started to go home under the convoy of Mr. Angerstyne, all the Sanker boys, except Toby, attending us. It was a lovely moonlight night; Mrs. Lake, who had come in at the tail of the soirée, remarked that the moon was never brighter.

"Why, just look there!" she exclaimed, as we turned up Edgar Street, intending to take that and the steps onwards; "the Tower gates are open!" For it was the custom to close the great gates of Edgar Tower at dusk.

"Oh, I know," cried Fred Sanker. "The sub-dean gives a dinner to-night; and the porter has left the gates wide for the carriages. Who is good for a race round the Green?"

It seemed that we all were, for the whole lot of us followed him in, leaving Mrs. Lake calling after us in consternation. The old Tower porter, no doubt thinking the Green was being charged by an army of ill-doers, rushed out of his place, shouting to us to come back.

Much we heeded him! Counting the carriages (three of them) waiting at the sub-dean's door, we raced homewards at will, some hither, some yonder. The evening's coolness felt delicious after the hot and garish day; the moonlight brought out the lights and shades of the queer old houses and the older cathedral. Collecting ourselves together again presently, at Fred Sanker's whoop, Mr. Angerstyne and Anne were missing.

"They've gone to look at the Severn, I think," said Dan Sanker. "I heard him tell her it was worth looking at in the moonlight."

Yes, they were there. He had Anne's arm tucked up under his, and his head bent over her that she might catch his whispers. He turned round when he heard us.

"Indeed we must go home, Mr. Angerstyne," said Julia Podd, who

had run down after me, and spoke crossly. "The college clock is chiming the quarter to eleven. What will Mrs. Lake say?"

"Is it so late?" he answered her, in a pleasant voice. "Time flies quickly in the moonlight: I've often remarked it."

Walking forward, he kept by the side of Julia; Anne and I followed together. Some of the boys were shouting themselves hoarse from the top of the ascent, wanting to know if we were lost.

"Is it all settled, Anne?" I asked her, jestingly, dropping my voice.

"Is what settled?" she returned. But she understood; for her face looked like a rose in the moonlight.

"You know. *I* can see, if the others can't. And if it makes you happy, Anne, I'm very glad of it.

"Oh Johnny, I hope—I hope no one else does see. But indeed you are making more of it than it deserves."

"What does he say to you?"

"He has not *said* anything. So you see, Johnny, you may be quite mistaken."

It was all the same: if he had not said anything yet, there could be no question that he meant soon to say it. We were passing the old elm trees just then, and the moonlight, flickering through them on Anne's face, lighted up the sweet hope that lay on it.

"Sometimes I think if—if papa should not approve of it!" she whispered.

"But he is sure to approve of it. One can't help liking Mr. Angerstyne, and his position is undeniable."

The three carriages were gone; and the porter kept up a fire of abuse as he waited to watch us through the little postern door. The boys, being college boys, returned it with interest. Wishing the Sankers good night, who ran straight down Edgar Street on their way home, we turned off up the steps, and found Mrs. Lake standing patiently at her door. I saw Mr. Angerstyne catch Anne's hand for a moment in his, under cover of our entrance.

The morning brought news. Dr. and Mrs. Lewis were on their way to Maythorn Bank, expected to reach it that evening, and the young ladies were bidden to depart for it on the following day.

A wonderful change had taken place in Dr. Lewis. If they had doubted before whether the Doctor was not going into his dotage, they could not doubt now, for he was decidedly *in* it. A soft-speaking, mooning man, now, utterly lost in the shadow cast by his wife's importance. She appeared to be smiling in face and gentle in accent as ever, but she overruled every soul in the house: nobody but herself had a will in it. What little strength of mind he might have had, his new bride had taken out of him.

Anne did not like it. Hitherto mistress of all things under her father, she found herself passed over as a nonentity. She might not express an opinion, or hazard a wish. "My dear, *I* am here now," Mrs. Lewis said to her once or twice emphatically. Anne was deposed; her reign was over.

One little thing that happened, she certainly did not like. Though humble-minded, entirely un-self-asserting, sweet-tempered and modest as a girl should be, she did not like this. Mrs. Lewis sent out invitations for dinner to some people in the neighbourhood, strangers until then to her; the table was too full by one, and she told Anne that she could not sit down. It was too bad; especially as Julia and Fanny Podd filled two of the more important places, with bunches of sweet peas fresh in their hair.

"Besides," Mrs. Lewis had said to Anne in the morning, "we must have a French side-dish or two, and there's nobody but you understands them."

Whether the having to play the host was too much for him, or that he did not like the slight put upon his daughter, before the dinner was half over, the Doctor fell asleep. He could not be roused from it. Herbert Tanerton, who had sat by Mrs. Lewis's side to say grace, thought it was not sleep but unconsciousness. Between them, the company carried him into the other room; and Anne, hastening to send in her French dishes, ran there to attend upon him.

"I hope and trust there's nothing amiss with his heart," said old Coney doubtfully in the bride's ear.

"My dear Mr. Coney, his heart is as strong as mine—believe me," affirmed Mrs. Lewis, flicking some crumbs off the front of her wedding dress.

"I hope it is, I'm sure," repeated Coney. "I don't like that blue tinge round his lips."

They went back to the dinner table when Dr. Lewis revived. Anne remained kneeling at his feet, gently chafing his hands.

"What's the matter?" he cried, staring at her like a man bewildered. "What are you doing?"

"Dear papa, you fell asleep over your dinner, and they could not wake you. Do you feel ill?"

"Where am I?" he asked, as if he were speaking out of a dream. And she told him what she could. But she had not heard those suspicious words of old Coney's.

It was some minutes yet before he got much sense into him, or seemed fully to understand. He fell back in the chair then, with a deep sigh, keeping Anne's hand in his.

"Shall I get you anything, papa?" she asked, "You had eaten scarcely any dinner, they say. Would you like a little drop of brandy-and-water?"

"Why was not your dress ready?"

"My dress!" exclaimed Anne.

"She said so to me, when I asked why you did not come to table. Not made, or washed, or ironed; or something."

Anne felt rather at sea. "There's nothing the matter with my dresses, papa," she said. "But never mind them—or me. Will you go back to dinner? Or shall I get you anything here?"

"I don't want to go back; I don't want anything," he answered. "Go and finish yours, my dear."

"I have had mine," she said with a faint blush. For indeed her dinner had consisted of some bread-and-butter in the kitchen, eaten over the French stew-pans. Dr. Lewis was gazing out at the trees, and seemed to be in thought.

"Perhaps you stayed away from home rather too long, papa," she suggested. "You are not accustomed to travelling; and I think you are scarcely strong enough for it. You looked very worn when you first came home; worn and ill."

"Ay. I told her it did not do for me; but she laughed. It was nothing but a whirl, you know. And I only want to be quiet."

"It is very quiet here, dear papa, and you will soon feel stronger. You shall sit out of doors in the sun of a day, and I will read to you. I wish you would let me get you ——"

"Hush, child. I'm thinking."

With his eyes still fixed on the out-of-door landscape, he sat stroking Anne's hand abstractedly. Nothing broke the silence, save the faint clatter of knives and forks from the dining-room.

"Mind, Anne, she made me do it," he suddenly exclaimed.

"Made you do what, papa?"

"And so, my dear, if I am not allowed to remedy it, and you feel disappointed, you must think as lightly of it as you are able, and don't blame me more than you can help. I'll alter it again if I can, be sure of that: but I don't have a moment to myself, and at times it seems that she's just my keeper."

Anne answered soothingly that all he did must be right, but had no time to say more, for Mr. Coney, stealing on tip-toe from the dining-room, came in to see after the patient. Anne had not the remotest idea what it was that the Doctor had alluded to; but she had caught up one idea with dread of heart—that the marriage had not increased his happiness. Perhaps had marred it.

Maythorn Bank did not suit Mrs. Lewis. Ere she had been two weeks at it, she found it insufferably dull; not to be endured at any price. There was no fashion thereabouts, and not much visiting; the neighbours were mostly simple, unpretending people, quite different from the style of company met with in garrison towns and pump-rooms. Moreover the few people who might have visited Mrs. Lewis,

did not seem to take to her, or to remember that she was there. This did not imply discourtesy: Dr. Lewis and his daughter had but just, so to say, come strangers into the place, and people could not practically recollect all at once that Maythorn Bank was inhabited. Where was the use of dressing up in peacock's plumes if nobody came to see her? The magnificent wardrobe, laid in during her recent honeymoon, seemed as good as wasted.

"I can't stand this!" emphatically cried Mrs. Lewis one day to her daughters. And Anne, chancing to enter the room unexpectedly at the moment, heard her say it, and wondered what it meant.

That same afternoon, Dr. Lewis had another attack. Anne found him sitting beside the pear-tree insensible, his head hanging over the arm of the bench. Travelling had not brought this second attack on; that was certain; for no man could be leading a more quiet, moping life than he was. Save that he listened now and then to some book that Anne read, he had no amusement whatever, no excitement; he might have sat all day long with his mouth closed, for all there was to open it for. Mrs. Lewis's powers of fascination, that she had exercised so persistently upon him as Mrs. Podd, seemed to have deserted her for good. She passed her hours gaping, sleeping, complaining, hardly replying to a question of his, if he by chance asked her one. Even the soft sweet voice that had charmed the world mostly degenerated now into a croak or a scream. Those very mild, not-say-bo-to-a-goose voices are sometimes only kept for public life.

"I shall take you off to Worcester," cried Mrs. Lewis to him, when he came out of his insensibility. "We will start as soon as breakfast's over in the morning."

Dr. Lewis began to tremble. "I don't want to go to Worcester," said he. "I want to stay here."

"But staying here is not good for you, my dear. You'll be better at Mrs. Lake's. It is the remains of this paint that is making you ill. I can smell it still quite strongly, and I decidedly object to stay in it."

"My dear, you can go; I should not wish to prevent you. But, as to the paint, I don't smell it at all now. You can all go. Anne will take care of me."

"My dear Dr. Lewis, do you think I would leave you behind me? It *is* the paint. And you shall see a doctor at Worcester."

But Mrs. Lewis did not intend that Anne should go; and stopped her when she saw her busy over her trunks.

"You need not pack your own things. You are not going to Worcester. It is intended that you shall remain here and take care of the house and of Sally."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Lewis, I could not stay here alone," cried Anne, a hundred thoughts rushing tumultuously into her mind. "It could not be."

"Not stay here alone! Why, what is to hinder it? Do you sup-

pose you would get run away with? Now, my dear, we will have no trouble, if you please. You will stay at home like a good girl—therefore you may unpack your box."

Anne went straight to her father, and found him with Herbert Tanerton. He had walked over from Timberdale to inquire after the Doctor's health.

"Could this be, papa?" she said. "That I am to be left alone here while you stay at Worcester?"

"Don't talk nonsense, child," was the peevish answer. "My belief is, that you dream dreams, Anne, and then fancy them realities."

"But Mrs. Lewis tells me that I am not to go to Worcester—that I am to stay at home," persisted Anne. And she said it before Mrs. Lewis, who had come into the room then and was shaking hands with the parson.

"I think, love, it will be so much better for dear Anne to remain here and see to things," she said, in that sweet company voice of hers.

"No," dissented the Doctor, plucking up the courage to be firm. "If Anne stays here, I shall stay. I'm sure I'd be thankful if you'd let us stay: we should get a bit of peace and quiet."

She did not make a fuss before the parson. Perhaps she saw that to hold out might cause some unprofitable commotion. Treating Anne to a beaming smile, she remarked that her dear papa's wish was of course law, and bade her run and finish her packing.

And when they arrived the next day at Lake's, and Anne heard that Henry Angerstyne was in truth still there, and knew that she should soon be in his presence, it did indeed seem to her that she had stepped into paradise. She was alone when he entered, the others had sought their respective chambers, leaving Anne to gather up their packages and follow, and she had her bonnet untied and her arms full of things when he came into the room. Paradise! she might have experienced some bliss in her life, but none like unto this. Her veins were tingling, her heart-blood leaping. How well he looked! how noble! how superior to other men! As he caught her hand in his, and bent to whisper his low words of greeting, she could scarcely contain within bounds the ecstasy of her emotion.

"I am so glad you are back again, Anne! I could not believe the good news when the letter came to Mrs. Lake this morning. You have been away two weeks, and they have seemed like months."

"You did not come over: you said you should," faltered Anne.

"Ay. And I sprained my foot the day you left, and have had to nurse it. It is not quite strong yet. Bad luck, was it not?—What do you want? Where are you going?"

"I must take these things up to papa and Mrs. Lewis. Please to let me go."

But, before he would release her hand, he suddenly bent his head and kissed her : once, twice.

"Pardon me, Anne, I could not help it ; it is only a French greeting," he whispered, as she escaped with her face in a flame, and her heart beating time to its own sweet music.

"What a stay Mr. Angerstyne is making !" exclaimed Fanny Podd, who had run about to seek Miss Dinah, and found her making a new surplice for Tom.

"Well, we are glad to have him," answered Miss Dinah, "and he has had a sprained ankle. We know now what is detaining him in Worcestershire. It seems that some old lady is lying ill at Malvern, and he can't get away."

"Some old lady lying ill at Malvern !" retorted Fanny, who liked to take Miss Dinah down when she could. "Why should that detain Mr. Angerstyne ? Who is the old lady !"

"She is a relation of his : his great-aunt, I think. And I believe she is very fond of him, and won't let him go to any distance. All these visits he makes to Malvern are to see her. She is very rich, and he will come in for her money."

"I'm sure he's rich enough without it ; he does not want more money," grumbled Fanny. "If the old lady would leave a little to those who need it, she might do some good."

"She'd have to be made of gold and diamonds if she left some to all who need it," sighed Miss Dinah. "Mr. Angerstyne deserves to be rich, he is so liberal with his money. Many a costly dainty he caused us to send up to that poor sick Captain Bristow, letting him think it was all in the regular boarding fare."

"But I think it was fearfully sly of him never to tell us why he went so much to Malvern—only you must always put in a good word for everybody, Miss Dinah. I asked him one day what his attraction was, that he should be perpetually running over there, and he gravely answered me that he liked the Malvern air."

Just for a few days Dr. Lewis seemed to get a little better. Mrs. Lewis's fascinations had returned to her, and she in a degree kept him alive. It might have been from goodness of heart, or it might have been that she did not like to neglect him before people just yet, but she was ever devising plans for his amusement—which of course included that of herself and of her daughters. Mr. Angerstyne had not been more lavish of money in coach hire than was Mrs. Lewis. Carriages for the country and flies for the town—that was the order of the day. Anne was rarely invited to make one of the party : for her there was never room. What of that ? At home she had the society of Mr. Angerstyne.

While they were driving everywhere, or taking their pleasure in the

town, shopping and exhibiting their finery, of which they seemed to display a new stock perpetually, Anne was left at liberty to enjoy her dangerous happiness. Dangerous, if it should not come to anything: and he had not spoken yet. They would sit together over their German, Anne trying to beat it into him, and laughing with him at his mistakes. If she went out to walk, she presently found herself overtaken by Mr. Angerstyne: and they would linger in the mellow light of the soft autumn days, or in the early twilight. Whatever might come of it, there could be no question that for the time she was living in the most intense happiness. And about a fortnight of this went on.

Then Dr. Lewis began to droop. One day when he was out he had another of those attacks in the carriage. It was very slight, Mrs. Lewis said when they got back; he did not lose consciousness for more than three or four minutes. But he continued to be so weak and ill afterwards that a physician was called in—Dr. Malden. What he said was known only to the patient and his wife, for nobody else was admitted to the conference.

"I want to go home," the Doctor said to Anne the next morning, speaking in his usual querulous faint tone and as if his mind were half gone. "I'm sure I did not smell any paint the last time; it must have been her fancy. I want to go there to be quiet."

"Well, papa, why don't you say so?"

"But it's of no use my saying so: she won't listen. I can't stand the racket here, child; the perpetual driving out: the wheels of the carriages shake my head. And look at the expense! It frightens me."

Anne scarcely knew what to answer. She herself was powerless; and, so far as she believed, her father was; utterly so. Powerless in the hands of his new wife. Dr. Lewis glanced round the room as if to make sure there were no eavesdroppers, and went on in a whisper.

"I'm terrified, Anne. I am being ruined. All my ready money's gone; she has had it all; she made me draw it out of the bank. And there, in that drawer, are two rolls of bills; she brought them to me yesterday, and there's nothing to pay them with."

Anne's heart fluttered. Was he only fancying these things in his decaying mind? Or, were they true?"

"September has now come in, papa, and your quarter's dividends will soon be due, you know. Do not worry yourself."

"They have been forestalled," he whispered. "She owed a lot of things before her marriage, and the people would have sued me had I not paid them. I wish we were back in France, child! I wish we had never left it!" And, but for one thing, Anne would have wished it, too.

One afternoon, when it was getting late, Anne went into High Street to buy some pink ribbon for her hair. Mrs. Lewis and her party had gone over to Croome, somebody having given her an order to see the gardens there. The house was as busy as it could be,

some fresh inmates of consequence being expected that evening; Anne had been helping Miss Dinah, and it was only at the last minute she could run out. In coming back, the ribbon bought, just abreast of the college gates, she heard steps behind her, and found her arm touched. It was by Mr. Angerstyne. For the past two days—nearly three—he had been absent at Malvern. The sight of him was to her as if the sun had shone.

"Oh!—is it you?—are you back?" she cried, with as much quiet indifference as she could put on.

"I have just got back. My aunt is better. And how are you, Anne?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Need you go in yet? Let us take a short stroll. The afternoon is delightful."

He called it afternoon, but it was getting on fast for evening: and he turned in at the college gates as he spoke. So they wound round St. Michael's churchyard and passed on to the Dark Alley, and so down the long flight of steps that leads from it, and on to the banks of the Severn.

"How are you all going on at Lake's?" he asked presently, breaking the silence.

"Just as usual. To-day is a grand field day," Anne added gaily: "at least, this evening is to be one, and we are not to dine till seven o'clock."

"Seven? So much the better. But why?"

"Some people of importance are coming ——"

Mr. Angerstyne's laugh interrupted her. She laughed also.

"It is what Miss Dinah said: 'people of importance.' They will arrive late, so the dinner-hour is put off."

"Take care, Anne!"

A horse, towing a barge, was overtaking them. Mr. Angerstyne drew Anne out of the way, and the dinner and the new guests were forgotten.

It was almost dusk when they returned. The figures on the college tower were darkened, as they came through the large gateway at the boat-house; the old elm-trees yonder, filled with their cawing rooks, looked weird in the dim twilight. Mr. Angerstyne did not turn to the Dark Alley again, but went straight on to the Green. He was talking of his estate in Essex. It was a topic often chosen by him; and Anne seemed to know the place quite well by this time.

"You would like the little stream that runs through the grounds," he was observing. "It is not, of course, like the grand river we have just left, but it is pleasant to wander by, for it winds in and out in the most picturesque manner possible, and the banks are overshadowed by trees. Yes, Anne, you would like that."

"Are you going through the cloisters?—is it not too late?" she interrupted, quite at a loss for something to say; not caring to answer that she *should* like to wander by the stream.

For he was crossing towards the little south cloister door: though onwards through the Green would have been their more direct road.

"Too late? No. Why should it be? You are not afraid of ghosts, are you?"

Anne laughed. But, lest she should be afraid of ghosts, he put her hand within his arm as they passed through the dark narrow passage beyond the postern; and so they marched arm-in-arm through the cloisters.

"To sit by that winding stream on a summer's day listening to its murmurs, to the singing of the birds, the sweet sighing of the trees; or holding low converse with a cherished companion—yes, Anne, you would like that. It would just suit you, for you are of a silent and dreamy nature."

There might not be much actual meaning in the words if you sat down to analyze them: but, to the inexperienced mind of Anne they sounded very like plain speaking. At any rate, she took them to be an earnest that she *should* sometime sit by that stream with him—his wife. The dusky cloisters seemed to have suddenly filled themselves with refulgent light; the gravestones on which she was treading felt soft as the mossy glades of fairy-land. Heaven was above her, and heaven beneath: there was no longer any prosaic earth for Anne Lewis.

"Good night, gentlefolks."

The salutation came from the cloister porter; who, coming in to close the gates, met them as they were nearing the west door. Not another word had passed until now: Mr. Angerstyne had fallen into silence; Anne could not have spoken to gain the world.

"Good night to you, my man."

Lake's was in a bustle when they reached it. The luggage of the new people, who had just been shown to their chambers, was being taken in; the carriage containing Dr. and Mrs. Lewis was then just driving up. Anne felt alarmed as she caught sight of her father, he looked so very ill. Mr. Angerstyne, in his ready kindly way, waited to help him down and to give him his arm along the passage; he then ran up to his room, remarking that he had letters to write.

The people assembled for dinner in full fig, out of deference to the new comers: who proved to be a Lady Knight, and a Mrs. and Miss Colter. Anne wore her pretty grey bridesmaid's dress, and the pink ribbon just bought in her hair. At the very last moment, Mr. Angerstyne came down; his hands full of the letters he had been writing.

"Why, are *you* here?" exclaimed Lady Knight: who seemed to be a chatty, voluble woman. "I *am* surprised."

Mr. Angerstyne, putting his letters on the side table, until he could take them to the post, turned round at the address. A moment's stare, half doubt, half astonishment, and he went forward to shake Lady Knight's hand.

"What brings you here?" she asked.

"I have been here some little time. Old Miss Gibson is at Malvern, so I can't go far away."

There was no opportunity for more: dinner was waiting. Mr. Angerstyne and Anne sat side by side that evening; Lady Knight was opposite. Miss Diana presided as usual, her best yellow cap perched on the top of her curls.

During an interval of silence, amid the general bustle and clatter of the dinner, for the two girls who waited (after their own fashion) had both run to carry away the fish and bring in the meat, Lady Knight looked across the table to put a question to Mr. Angerstyne.

"How is your wife?"

The silence dropped to a dead stillness. He appeared not to hear.

"How is your wife, Henry Angerstyne? Have you seen her lately?"

He could not make believe to be deaf any longer, and answered with angry curtness.

"No, I have not. She is all right, I suppose."

By the way the whole table stared, you might have thought a bombshell had fallen. Miss Diana sat with her mouth open in sheer amazement.

"Are you really married, Mr. Angerstyne?"

"Of course he is married," said Lady Knight. "All the world knows that. His wife is my cousin. I saw her at Lowestoft a few weeks ago, Henry. She was looking prettier than ever."

"Ah, Mr. Angerstyne, how sly you were, not to tell us!" cried Mrs. Lewis, playfully shaking her fan at him. "You —— Oh, goodness me!"

A loud crash! Jenny the maid had dropped a hot vegetable dish on the floor, scattering the pieces and spilling the peas; and followed it up with a shriek and a scream. That took off the attention; and Mr. Angerstyne, coolly eating away at his bread, turned to make some passing remark to Anne.

But the words were left unspoken. No ghost ever seen, in cloisters or out of them, was whiter than she. Lips and fingers were alike trembling.

"You should be more careful, Jenny!" he called out in a tone of authority. "Ladies don't care to be startled in this way." Just

as though Anne had turned white from the clatter of the broken dish.

Well, it had been a dreadful revelation for her. All the sunshine of this world seemed to have gone out for ever; to have left nothing behind it but a misty darkness. Rallying her pride and her courage, she went on with her dinner, as the others did. Her head was throbbing, her brain burning; her mind had turned to chaos. She heard them making arrangements to go on a pic-nic party to Croome Woods on the morrow; not in the least understanding what was said or planned.

"You did surprise us!" observed Mrs. Lewis to Lady Knight, when they were in the drawing-room after dinner, and Mr. Angerstyne had gone out with his letters. "What could have been his motive for allowing us to think him a bachelor?"

"A dislike to mention her name," replied Lady Knight, candidly. "That was it, I expect. He married her for her pretty face, and then found out what a goose she was. So they did not get on together. She goes her way and he goes his; now and then they meet for a week or two, but it's not often."

"What a very unsatisfactory state of things!" cried Miss Dinah, who was handing round the cups of coffee herself for fear of another upset. "Is it her fault or his?"

"Faults on both sides," said Lady Knight; who had an abrupt way of speaking, and was as poor as a church mouse. "She has a fearfully affronting temper of her own; those women with dolls' faces sometimes have; and he was not as forbearing as he might have been. Any way, that is the state of affairs between Mr. and Mrs. Angerstyne; and, apart from it, there's no scandal or reproach attaching to either of them."

Anne, sitting in a quiet corner, listened to all this mechanically. What mattered the *details* to her?—the broad fact had been enough. The hum of conversation was going on all around; her father, looking somewhat the better for his dinner, was playing at backgammon with Tom Lake. She saw nothing, knew nothing, until Mr. Angerstyne dropped into the seat beside her.

"Shall you join this expedition to Croome to-morrow, Anne?"

Julia and Fanny were thumping over a duet, pedal down, and Anne barely caught the low-spoken words.

"I do not know," she answered after a brief pause. "My head aches."

"I don't much care about it myself; rather the opposite. I shall certainly not go if you don't."

Why! he was speaking to her just as though nothing had occurred. If anything could have added to her sense of shame and misery, it was this. It sounded like an insult, arousing all the spirit she

possessed: her whole nature rose in rebellion against his line of conduct.

"Why have you been talking to me these many weeks as you have been doing, Mr. Angerstyne?" she asked in her straightforward simplicity, turning her face to his.

"There has been no harm in it," he answered.

"*Harm!*" she repeated from her wrung heart. "Perhaps not to you. There has been at least no good in it."

"If you only knew what an interval of pleasantness it has been for me, Anne! Almost deluded me into forgetting my odious chains and fetters."

"Would a *gentleman* have so amused himself, Mr. Angerstyne?"

But she gave him no opportunity of reply. Rising from her seat, and drawing her slight form to its full height, she looked into his face steadily, knowing not perhaps how much of scorn and reproach her gaze betrayed, and crossed the room to sit down by her father. Once after that she caught his eye: caught the expression of sorrow, of repentance, of deep commiseration that shone in every line of his face—for she could not altogether hide the pain seated in her own. And later, amid the bustle of the general good-nights, she found her hand pressed within his, and heard his whispered, contrite prayer:

"Forgive me, Anne; forgive me!"

She lay awake all night, resolving to be brave, to make no sign; praying heaven to help her bear the anguish of her sorely-stricken heart, and not to let the blow quite kill her. But she would feel it during the rest of her life.

And before the house was well up in the morning, a messenger arrived post haste from Malvern, to summon Mr. Angerstyne to his aunt's dying bed. He told Miss Dinah, when he shook hands with her at parting, that she might as well send his traps after him, if she would be so kind, as he thought he should not return to Worcester again.

And that was the ending of Anne Lewis's love. Not a very uncommon end people say. But she had been hardly dealt by.

And I am very sorry not to be able to get in the end before next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

LAURENCE STERNE.

IN the chapter in "The Virginians" which tells us how a Sunday was passed in a nobleman's country-house in the last century, Mr. Thackeray has drawn a picture of the chaplain which, in many points, reminds us of the subject of this paper.

We must remember the manners of the times in glancing at such a character as Sterne's. Perhaps he was no worse than a great number of his class, and certainly he was far more clever. We begin then with the confession that we are not going to describe a hero : but as a man who once possessed considerable fame, a few lines about him may perhaps be allowed.

"Yonder lean, cadaverous lad, who is always borrowing money, telling lies, and himself intended for the Church, is Master Laurence Sterne, an archbishop's grandson. For shame, you little reprobate! But what a genius the fellow has! He shall have a sound flogging, and as soon as the young scamp is out of the whipping-room, give him a gold medal. Such would be my practice, were I Dr. Birch and master of the school."

Happily this terrible portrait of youthful depravity has no historical basis beyond the fertile imagination of Mr. Roundabout. But after quoting it we may be excused if we refer to another schoolboy adventure which Sterne mentions himself in the few notes he has left about his own life. There is the true spirit of mischief in this boyish freak of his. The schoolroom had just been made resplendent with new whitewash, but the incautious workmen had left their ladders and brushes behind. Up scrambled the mischievous urchin, and wrote, in large capital letters, his own signature, "Lau. Sterne." He was severely flogged by the usher for defacing the work. The superior, however, resented the punishment, declaring that the name was that of a genius, and should never be erased.

Laurence was sent to Jesus College, Cambridge, by his cousin, in 1733, whom he tells us became a father to him after the death of his parent, who had been a lieutenant in the army. Laury's father saw a good deal of service in his day, and seems to have been a regular Irishman. His son has thus painted him. "He was in his temper somewhat rapid and hasty, but of a kindly, sweet disposition, void of all design, and so innocent in his own intentions that he suspected no one, so that you might have cheated him ten times a day, if nine had not been sufficient for your purpose." This sketch clearly points to the original whence arose Uncle Toby.

There is one member of the Sterne family whose name is now scarcely ever heard of, but who must have led a constant life of drudgery and neglect. Sterne's mother was the daughter of an army sutler called Nuttle, and the lieutenant, having got into debt to him, made peace with his creditor by marrying the step-daughter, who was a widow. Laurence was their second child, and was born at Clonmel, November 24th, 1713. This poor woman seems to have led the life of a regular soldier's drudge. The terms of the marriage did not look promising, and the sequel answered to the beginning. Following her husband about from place to place, sometimes with and sometimes without the children, she was exposed again and again to perils by sea and land.

After the death of the husband we hear very little of the widow; the last time any notice is made of her is in a visit which she paid to York to see her son Laurence, who was then a clergyman with a living near that city, and a prebendal stall in the cathedral. Matters then could not have been going on very badly with him, for he was still quite young, and had already gained a wife with some money, and considerable Church preferment. We hope, therefore, that he treated his poor mother with kindness. He speaks of hurrying to York to meet her, as having "much to say to her," and as being busy arranging some of her difficulties, for he writes, "I trust my poor mother's affair is by this time ended, to our comfort, and I trust hers."

Quite uneventful was the greater part of Sterne's life. From his early love-letters up to the eve of the publication of "Tristram Shandy" —nearly twenty years—not a fragment of his correspondence remains. No one seems to have thought that the skinny, sallow, badly-dressed parson was ever to make a noise in the world. All this time he was passing his days at Sutton, and amusing himself, he tells us, with books, painting, fiddling, and shooting. But a great change took place in his fortune after he became an author. The first two volumes of "Tristram Shandy" were published with immense success in January, 1760. "At present," wrote Horace Walpole in April, "nothing is talked of, nothing admired, but what I cannot help calling a very insipid and tedious performance; it is a kind of novel, called 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,' the great humour of which consists in the whole narration always going backward. It makes one smile two or three times at the beginning but in recompense makes one yawn for two hours. The characters are tolerably kept up, but the humour is for ever attempted and missed."

So much for the opinion of this smart and fashionable letter-writer. But the public were not of the same way of thinking, and as every year brought forth its two new volumes, the success and reputation of the author received an additional triumph.

Such was Sterne's life then after he became an author. The greater

part of the winter and most of the summer he lived in London, where he had lodgings in Bond Street, and the rest of the year he retired to his Yorkshire living to compose fresh instalments of his "Tristram Shandy." His London life was one constant scene of gaiety and dissipation. His highest aim in existence was "to play and trifle life away." His tenderness evaporated in love-making; he had always an unlimited amount of tears to shed on every occasion, and his liberality scarcely ever went beyond tips to chambermaids and macaroons to donkeys.

As for his wife, any interest he might at one time have felt in that quarter seems soon to have died out, and all sentimental allusion respecting her is soon considered by the amorous Laurence as only "sweetness wasted on the desert air." This is how he speaks of her in a letter to Mrs. Draper, who under the name of Eliza formed the subject of his last passion, only a year before his death. Nothing can show the utter evil of Sterne's nature more clearly than this unfortunate correspondence. He had just returned from his last trip on the Continent, the account of which supplied the motive for the "Sentimental Journey." Quite broken in health, worn out with the constant dissipation of London, he can yet venture to write in this disgraceful style: "Talking of widows, pray, Eliza, if ever you are such, do not think of giving yourself to some wealthy nabob, because I design to marry you myself. My wife cannot live long, and I know not the woman I should like so well for her substitute as yourself! 'Tis true I am ninety-five in constitution and you but twenty-five—rather too great a disparity this—but what I want in youth I will make up in wit and good humour. Not Swift so loved his Stella, Scaron his Maintenon, or Waller his Sacharissa, as I will love and sing thee, my wife elect."

While her husband was thus disgracing himself in London, poor Mrs. Sterne was living with her daughter at Marseilles, where some officious Englishman, who was passing by that way, told the wife the disagreeable news.

But Sterne's course was by this time nearly come to an end. He had often found himself travelling down the valley of the Great Shadow, and when at Toulouse he only escaped by dispensing altogether with the doctors, "the arrantest of all the charlatans in Europe," and leaving his case to "Dame Nature," who, "dear goddess, has saved me fifty different pinching bouts."

But this could not go on for ever, and his spirits, which had always hitherto supported his sickly frame, now began to give way. Wearied with the world's vanity, he longs for his home at Coxwould. Thither he travelled slowly, and thus writes from Newark, where he arrived nearly exhausted: "Conveyed thus far, like a bale of cadaverous goods consigned to Pluto and Company, lying at the bottom of my chaise upon a low pillow, which I had the prévoyance to purchase

before I set out." Established at Coxwould his health began to mend. The "good air, a quiet retreat and quiet reflection along with it, with an ass to milk and another to ride out upon, all do wonders."

It is much to be doubted, however, whether Sterne's reflections at this time were quiet. He had many causes to make him anxious. His conscience could not have been easy, and the glimpses we get of him at that period are anything but cheering. He seems to feel in himself that he is failing. "I would only covenant," he says, "for just so much health and spirits as are sufficient to carry my pen through the task I have set it this summer." The task to which he refers is his "Sentimental Journey." A wish may have entered his mind at this time to atone for some of his past offences against decency and his treatment of men and manners in this book, and the first part is indeed written in a style gentle and subdued, but it is sad to relate that a coarse suggestion spoils the last page of this very work, finished only just before his death.

It is this fatal blot, common to all Sterne's writings, which has banished those pictures of life and character, often so exquisitely beautiful, from the drawing-room, and consigned them to a proscribed corner in the library. The jesters of society, especially when they forget the cloth they wear, very often expose themselves to personalities.

Working busily in the quiet of the country, getting ready his annual amount of work for the coming season in town, Sterne began to look with longing to see again his wife and daughter, who were just coming over from Paris to meet him. The increase to his happiness, however, did not prove as great as he expected, for he wrote a ribald letter in Latin to a friend, telling him he was more weary of his wife than ever. "The child, the darling of his heart," as he calls his daughter, fulfilled his utmost expectations. "My heart bleeds when I think of parting with her." But, unfortunately, Sterne's heart used to bleed too easily; with all his affection for his child, which, perhaps, after all, was the best thing about him, he could yet at his death, which happened only a few months later, leave her and her mother quite destitute, his only legacy consisting of debts to the extent of £1,100. To pay off thisa subscription was got up at the next York races, the collection, amounting to £800, being made upon the *race-ground*. After this little more is known. They returned to France, where the mother died, and the daughter afterwards married a M. de Medalle. About their subsequent life nothing has come to light, but a sad tradition lingered on that in the fury of the French Revolution, which set in fifteen years afterwards, the child that Sterne loved perished.

And more painful in its utter desolation was the death of poor Yorick himself. Striving to be gay even to the end, though feeling the touch of death upon him, he went on carrying his cap and bells as long as

he could stagger. He breathed his last at his lodgings in Old Bond Street on the 18th of March, 1768, and few and cold enough were the offices that he received.

A servant was sent from a party of his gay friends, who were dining together in a neighbouring street, to ask after the sick man's health. The landlady, who opened the door, bade the messenger go up to the nurse. On entering the room he saw that the crisis was at hand, and he waited for the end. He had not long to wait; after a few minutes Sterne exclaimed, "Now is it come!" and putting up his hand, as if to ward off a blow, expired in the act. Alas, poor Yorick! a footman and a sick-nurse alone to see thee die. A passing shade is cast over the revellers' banquet, a few smooth words are spoken about the gibes and gambols and songs and flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar; then, as of course, the claret goes round, and Lord March resumes his remarks on the merits of a racehorse, or the graces of a ballet-dancer.

It is not pleasant to dwell on scenes like these. It must be at all times a dangerous trade to have to bring one's tears and laughter and feelings to market, to write them on paper and sell them for money. Such a trade would at the best be likely to lead to exaggeration and false sensibility. And all these dangers would be increased in such a character as Sterne's. One cannot look at his portrait by Reynolds and not be struck with the strong resemblance which exists between his features and his conduct. The countenance is full of mirth and wit, but withal there is an unmistakable expression of evil mingled with the fun. He was not without some touches of good nature, and La Fleur, his valet, tells us that he relieved as well as pitied the wretched objects he met with in his travels. But these casual acts of charity cannot cover the multitude of his offences. No amount of whitewash can hide the evil which lies behind.

Honest old Sam Johnson could not endure the man Sterne, as he called him. A lady one day asked the doctor how he liked Yorick's sermons. "I know nothing of them," was his answer. Later on the subject was renewed, and he then censured them severely. The lady, who had not forgotten his plain reply, immediately retorted, "I understood, sir, you had not read them." "No, madam," cried the sage, "I did read them, but it was in a stage-coach; I should not even have deigned to have looked at them had I been at large!" The fastidious Gray admired these same sermons, though whilst reading them he said he could always fancy he saw Sterne throwing down his wig in the face of the congregation. And more recently Mr. Gladstone, in his review of the low religious tone of that day, pays a passing tribute to the merits of these discourses.

Doubtless in considering Sterne, or any other person who lived in those days, the general tendency of the age ought to be kept in view.

And what an age it was! The times everywhere seemed out of joint. The spirit of revolution was in the air, and every county in Europe was on the point of experiencing a great convulsion. In politics, in manners, in religion, there was everywhere, in the highest classes of society as well as in the lowest, a deep corruption. The pictures which the old novelists present to us of the manners of our fathers seem now almost beyond belief.

Vice was the fashion. Montesquieu wrote, "Money is here esteemed above everything, honour and virtue not much." Fielding, Smollett, and Hogarth have left us pictures which seem almost impossible.

Some allowance therefore must be made for Sterne, from the state of society in which he lived. The man who could draw so charming a hero as Captain Shandy must have had some good in his nature. In his portrait of this delightful character, the humorous prevails over the sentimental, and accounts for the success. Of real genuine pathos Sterne was quite incompetent. Turn to the celebrated deathbed scene of Le Fèvre. One may almost fancy him arranging his pocket-handkerchief in graceful folds, with one eye tear-streaming, while the other watches the effect of the touching narrative upon the audience.

It is always dangerous to cultivate sentiment which can never find the natural channel of active benevolence. Anyone who is always giving way to the pleasures of imaginary grief naturally becomes effeminate and luxurious, and it is often found that nobody can be more hard-hearted in actual life than some who have the keenest appreciation of beautiful sentiment in the ideal world.

In "Tristram Shandy" the sentiment is often too fine, like the perfume of a flower brought into a sick-room, which evaporates almost before it is imbibed. The whole work is a storehouse where curiosities of all ages and countries are thrown together in a mass. Gravity is a bore; away with care, laugh and be gay. Thus would he live for ever a sort of idyllic existence, all song and dance, such as he sketched once upon a time, "on the road betwixt Nismes and Lunel, where there was the best Muscatto wine in all France." How charming the village dance with Nanette, and the pipe of the lame youth ringing musically on the ear. Where are they all now? Farewell, poor Sterne. You lived your day, and thought the time was pleasant as the winged hours passed rapidly away.

But the end came at last, when the silver cord was broken, and the festive scene grew dark, and all the laughter ended only in a sigh. It is always sad to see genius misused, and to meet with a character endowed with such infinite wit, and humour so exquisite, at the same time stained with so deep a tint of moral obliquity.

E. B.

FIVE DAYS OUT—FIVE YEARS IN.

ABOUT eleven o'clock one morning, towards the end of September, 1869, the idlers of Baden-Baden were startled by the appearance of a very unusual phenomenon in the shape of a post-carriage, conducted by an orthodox yellow-jacketed and jackbooted postilion, and dashing along the Lange Strasse until it came to a sudden halt before the door of the Hôtel de la Cour de Bade. Its occupants, two in number, had evidently, for some particular reason of their own, preferred this obsolete mode of travelling to the more expeditious railway.

The porter's bell having summoned the landlord to receive the newcomers, the latter were informed that not a single room in the house was at that moment vacant, and were referred by the courteous host to a small hotel, of very moderate pretensions, entitled the "Stern," and situated on the opposite side of the Lange Strasse. To the "Stern," therefore, they went; and the travellers, after inscribing their names in the "Livre des Voyageurs," as the Comte de Commercy and the Baron de Brieg, were soon agreeably engaged in discussing as sumptuous a déjeûner as the limited resources of the establishment could supply.

They were both young, neither of them having apparently attained his twenty-fifth year; but in other respects the difference between the two was remarkable. The Count was extremely tall and slightly formed; his features were regular and good, and the expression of his countenance, if not exactly handsome, was at once intelligent and prepossessing. His companion, on the contrary, both as regarded face and figure, was singularly unattractive.

While their repast was preparing, the immediate attendance of a neighbouring tailor had been bespoken; and an hour later, leaving his customers still dallying over their coffee and cigars, the Schneider went on his homeward way, rejoicing in perhaps the most extensive order he had ever booked. For, oddly enough, although they had brought with them a goodly show of linen and other accessories, both the Count and the Baron had most unaccountably neglected to provide themselves with any incumbrances in the shape of outer garments, beyond the very unpretending suits in which they had travelled.

It has rarely happened that, at so late a season of the year, this pleasant place of resort has been so fully and fashionably thronged as it was in 1869. The weather was lovely; the Lichtenthal avenue, rich in autumnal tints, still sheltered many a group of loungers from the rays of the noonday sun; Eberstein, Rothenfels, Gernsbach, and Yburg

still attracted the amateurs of picturesque scenery and improvised déjeûners ; while the cracking whips of the droschke drivers resounded cheerily through the woods encircling the Altes Schloss.

On the afternoon in question the clock of the church in the old town had just struck three, and Herr Koennemann's orchestra, punctual to a minute, had already commenced the overture to "Marta," when our two acquaintances from the Gasthof zum Stern, leisurely sauntering up one of the side avenues, and diverging from thence into the main alley, paused for an instant to examine the localities apparently new to them.

"Cà doit être çà," said the Count, glancing at the talismanic word "Conversation," inscribed in large letters on the centre building before him.

"Evidemment," assented the Baron, throwing away the end of his cigar. "Shall we go in?"

"Parbleu!" replied his companion. "What else are we here for?"

As they ascended the steps leading to the interior, a group, consisting of three individuals reclining on a bench facing the entrance, honoured them with a languid stare.

"Fresh arrivals!" remarked the eldest of the party, a pleasant-looking, jaunty Frenchman, with iron-grey hair and thick moustache, and wearing a dainty rosebud in his button-hole. "Excursionists from Strasburg, by their dress."

"Bringing their little savings as a voluntary offering to friend Dupressoir," suggested one of the others, a middle-aged slim-waisted Adonis, delicately toying with his perfumed handkerchief, and lighting, as he spoke, a cigarette Rheinboldt. "What say you, incorruptible magistrate?" added he, turning to the remaining member of the coterie, a German, with strongly-marked features and a judicial air.

"Ma foi, Count," answered the personage addressed, "they remind me of a conversation I overheard last night between two undeniable Alsatians. 'How has fortune treated you?' asked No. 1. 'Shamefully!' replied No. 2. 'Would you believe it, mon cher, I have been here only three weeks, playing regularly every day, and I have already lost fifteen francs!'"

"I don't suppose the united purses of our provincial couple could muster a much larger total," rejoined the Count. "Did you notice, Dussault, what a hang-dog expression the short one had?"

"I hardly looked at him," said the owner of the rosebud, "but the other's face seems familiar to me. I am certain I have seen him somewhere."

He had scarcely finished speaking when a young man, seemingly about eight or nine and twenty, fashionably attired in a black velveteen coat, and evidently in a high state of excitement, dashed down the steps at a single bound, and rapidly approached the trio.

"I never saw anything like it," exclaimed the new-comer; "such utter ignorance of the game, and such overpowering luck! I came out on purpose to fetch you, for it's worth seeing, I promise you."

"What!" said Dussault, rising from his seat, "has the Princess had a turn at last?"

"Not she! I question if her porte-monnaie has anything in it half so valuable as its own golden clasps. She has been backing the wrong colour ever since she sat down, and so has the fair-haired man from Vienna. No, no. Fancy a fellow who, I'll wager, never saw a trente et quarante table before, strolling in with his pockets full of bank-notes, and throwing them down at random no matter where, and always spotting the winner! As for old Gérard, the inspector, he is perfectly scared, and even Marschikoff is following suit, and actually playing louis instead of five-franc pieces. But we are wasting time here; are you coming, Précival?"

"A vos ordres," said the Count. "Monsieur Obernadel," he continued, addressing the magistrate, "does your philosophy permit you to accompany us?"

"The study of human nature is always profitable, Count, even at the tapis vert," gravely replied the German.

"Allons, allons!" cried Arnstein impatiently, whereupon the whole party ascended the steps without further delay, and passing through the grande salle, entered the room devoted to the mysteries of the trente et quarante.

Threading their way with some difficulty through the mass of spectators wedged closely in double rows round the table, they arrived precisely as the deciding card fell from the hand of the dealer. "Rouge perd, et couleur!" proclaimed that functionary, one of the leading tailleurs attached to the bank; upon which a sympathetic buzz circulated among the bystanders, and six thousand-franc notes were carefully unfolded by the employé sitting opposite, and placed in the compartment appropriated to the *inverse*. Beside the officiating croupier sat the fascinating Princess S——, leaning eagerly forward, and nervously drumming her empty porte-monnaie on the green cloth before her; while the wealthy banker H——, peering through his double eye-glass, surveyed the exciting scene with the urbane condescension of a millionnaire.

One person alone, a young man in a travelling suit of some cheap material, erect at one end of the table, betrayed no symptom of emotion beyond an occasional deeply-drawn breath, as the heaps of notes piled in front of him grew larger and larger: and this was no other than the Comte de Commercy. Regardless of the whispered promptings of his friend standing immediately behind him, he carelessly, and as it were mechanically, transferred his stake from one division to another, and quietly awaited the result.

Already the words "la banque va sauter" were on everyone's lips; already the fresh bundle of notes supplied by the white-cravated cashier had been counted and prepared to be handed over; when Arnstein, who had watched the game with feverish anxiety, and whose keen eye had reckoned up the points as unerringly as the dealer himself, suddenly exclaimed, "Il a perdu!" Quick as thought, the *maximum* staked on the red by the hitherto invincible player was swept away; the Comte de Commercy, still the observed of all observers coolly thrusting his winnings into his breast-pocket, retired from the table, and without uttering a syllable quitted the room together with his companion. A few minutes later, the trente et quarante was deserted save by the regular punters, and a beggarly account of five-franc pieces met the inquiring glance of the tailleur, as he uttered his monotonous and unvarying formula, "Faites le jeu, messieurs: le jeu est fait, rien ne va plus!"

Meanwhile the guests of the "Stern," had quietly adjourned to their hotel, and after an equitable division of the contents of the breast-pocket, amounting to twenty-eight thousand francs, hailed a passing droschke, and started on a sight-seeing expedition, leaving the direction and duration of their promenade to the discretion of the driver. That worthy, being a bit of a physiognomist, and not altogether indifferent to an extra trinkgeld, profited largely by the permission, and rattled off at a steady pace towards the Cascade of Geroldsau, and from thence by a circuitous route over the Fremersberg to the Jagdhaus, from which point a quarter of an hour's drive brought the "Herrschaften" back to the Lange Strasse, just in time for dinner.

"We'll try that café to-morrow," observed M. de Commercy to his friend, as he poured out a bumper of Marcobrunner, "provided we have some clothes fit to wear. I wouldn't exhibit myself in this old jacket a second time for a trifle."

"I don't call eight-and-twenty thousand francs a trifle," said the Baron. "It strikes me the people looked more at the bank-notes than at your coat. But, if you will take my advice, Alphonse ——"

"Hush!" interrupted the other, turning suddenly pale; "are you mad?"

"*Bah!* we are alone, and there are more Alphonses than you in the world. What I was going to say was this: while you were playing, I was watching and listening, and I came to the conclusion that the sooner we are on the move the better. *There are too many French here.* Didn't you tell me you had yourself recognised one?"

"Yes, old Dussault, but it doesn't follow that he recognised *me*," said the Count, filling his glass with a somewhat unsteady hand, and swallowing its contents at a draught. "Besides, I haven't broken the

bank yet, and I mean to do it, and not later than to-morrow, or my name isn't ——"

"Commercy," suggested his friend, with a smile.

"*De* Commercy, if you please, Monsieur le Baron! So, if your Seigneurie will ring for coffee, we may as well see what is going on in the town. There must be a decent billiard-table somewhere in Baden."

It is evident from the foregoing conversation that, had not circumstances intervened to procure for M. Dupressoir's employés a temporary respite, they would have had on the following day to sustain a rude assault at the hands of the chivalrous Comte de Commercy. But, as certainly as "l'homme propose," there is invariably somebody else "qui dispose;" and in the present case the somebody in question was no other than the unpunctual Herr Schnipperle. It was not until the fourth morning after their arrival at the Queen of Spas that his long-suffering and exasperated customers felt themselves sufficiently metamorphosed to justify their re-appearance in that cosmopolitan arena bounded on the right by Marx's library, and on the left by the Maison Messmer.

However, there at length they sat, in all the splendour of superfine broadcloth, delicately varnished boots, and gloves of immaculate freshness, sipping chartreuse verte at the Café Weber at two o'clock in the afternoon, and smoking extra-sized regalias selected from the emporium of the Burgomaster Gaus. Their joint magnificence, by no means unnoticed or uncriticised by the company at large, especially attracted the observation of an old gentleman perusing the *Gaulois* at an adjoining table, who not only scanned the new-comers, with a perseveringly searching glance, but on their rising from their seats, and entering the conversation by a side-door communicating with the galerie des fumeurs, laid his newspaper aside, and walked quietly behind them into the play-room. The sight of a bulky pocket-book, somewhat ostentatiously produced by the taller of the two, seemed to satisfy his curiosity; for without waiting to ascertain the result of even the first coup he abruptly retired, and started off at a round pace in the direction of the railway station. Arrived at the telegraph office, he indited and dispatched a message, the address on which ran as follows:—

"Monsieur Chifflard,
"Préfecture de Police,
"Paris."

In the meantime, things were looking badly for the associates at the trente et quarante; after a few fallacious and will-o'-the-wisp-like gleams of sunshine, a persistent run of ill luck had set in against them, and every successive deal made a fresh inroad on the rapidly

decreasing contents of the pocket-book. Nothing daunted, however, M. de Commercy, irritated by the sotto voce remonstrances of his partner, and piqued by the semi-compassionate, semi-satirical remarks of the bystanders, struggled gamely on, and shifted his stake from black to red, and from red back again to black, with dogged but unavailing pertinacity. At length, suddenly changing his tactics, and extracting from his apparently inexhaustible reserve six thousand-franc notes, he threw them carelessly on the red, which had already passed twice.

"Tout va à la masse?" inquired the dealer.

The Count nodded.

"Imbécile!" muttered the Baron de Brieg at his elbow.

"Pas tant que çà!" retorted his friend in a low voice a minute later, as the coup terminated in his favour, and six supplementary billets were deposited on the table, side by side with his own. Three more successive attempts produced a similar result, and the excitement of the "gallery" was gradually working up to fever heat, when to the surprise of all present, as the croupier, before turning up the first card, looked inquiringly round to verify the amount staked by the different players, M. de Commercy, instead of the usual assenting nod, coolly transferred the accumulated mass of notes from the board to his own pocket.

"Rien ne va," said he.

While the spectators were still gazing in stupor at this unaccountable desertion of a "série," the deal proceeded, and the red *lost*.

"Il a du nez!" muttered M. Marschikoff, ruefully, as his solitary louis was swept away.

At that moment five o'clock struck, and the majority of the company, eagerly commenting on the scene they had just witnessed, dispersed to their various tables d'hôte, leaving the German excursionists, who had dined at one, in undisturbed possession of the trente et quarante.

"Deduct eighteen thousand francs loss from twenty-four thousand gain, and there remains a balance of six thousand to the good," observed the Count to his associate, as they paced up and down the main alley by way of a mild constitutional before dinner. "A mere drop in the ocean," he added, contemptuously.

"Many drops make a shower," sententiously replied the Baron de Brieg.

About half-past ten on the same evening the loungers in the immediate neighbourhood of the Conversation were startled by the sound of voices in angry discussion proceeding from the interior of the building. Presently a crowd of some twenty or thirty persons rushed through the glass doors opening on to the peristyle, in the

midst of whom an individual, struggling and vociferating, was hustled down the steps in spite of his resistance, and half supported, half dragged along the promenade by two police agents attached to the establishment, followed by a young man, who had vainly attempted to interpose between the assailants and their victim. A droschke, stationed at the end of the avenue adjoining the library, having been hastily summoned, the now nearly insensible object of this hostile demonstration was lifted inside, and committed to the charge of his companion. In another minute the vehicle with its double freight was progressing rapidly in the direction of the Lange Strasse.

In the interim a group of habitués were discussing the recent occurrence in the large room of the Conversation, M. de Précival, Dussault, and Arnstein among the number. "I saw it all," said the latter, "and can tell you exactly what happened. The two fellows had been dining at Weber's, and by the time coffee was served the taller one had had considerably more than his share of 'la veuve Clicquot,' and became so boisterous that old Madame Weber wouldn't stand it, and turned them out. The other did all he could to get him home, but he wasn't strong enough to hold him, and before I could interfere the Comte de Commercy, or whatever his name may be, was steadying himself with his two hands on the trente et quarante table, with a pocket-book full of notes in front of him, and shouting out, 'Tout va à la masse!' Of course there was the deuce of a row; Gérard, the inspector, tried to reason with him at first, but he hit out right and left, and pulling a handful of louis out of his pocket, tossed them about the room for a scramble, till the policeman and two or three croupiers got hold of him, and out he went, tumbling down the steps as you may have noticed, with a whole mob of fellows at his heels. He dropped his pocket-book in the struggle, but his friend, who was as sober as a judge, by the way, picked it up, and I fancy is gone to see him safe home."

"What did you say his name was?" asked M. de Précival.

"The *Bade-Blatt* calls him the Comte de Commercy."

"There is no such title," said the other. "I know no Commercy, except the station on the Strasburg line, where they sell the Madeleines."

"His name may be Commercy, for all I care," observed Dussault, "but he is no more a Count than I am. I seldom forget a face, and can positively affirm that I have seen him officiating as a clerk at my bankers' in Paris."

"A thousand pardons, Monsieur," interposed the old gentleman who had dispatched the telegram in the afternoon, and who had been listening attentively to the foregoing conversation. "May I, without indiscretion, inquire who those bankers are?"

"Certainly, Monsieur," replied Dussault. "Messrs. Traite and Billet, Rue de la Victoire."

"Oh, oh!" cried Arnstein; "the firm we were reading about this morning! I begin to smell a rat."

"In that case," pursued the stranger, with a quiet chuckle, "it is probable that to-morrow you will hear some curious details respecting this mysterious personage. In the meantime, I have the honour of wishing you good evening."

With these words, and bowing politely to the company, he left the room.

"Who is that?" said M. de Précival. "Does anyone know him?"

"I do," answered one of the bystanders. "He is B——, the juge d'instruction."

"It strikes me the game is up in this quarter," soliloquised the Baron de Brieg, when his friend had been finally disposed of for the night, "so the sooner I try new ground the better. Shall I tell him where I am going? Not yet; it might be dangerous, and one can't be too careful. So now for the funds," he continued, emptying the contents of the pocket-book on the table, and methodically counting the notes. "Forty-five—and fifty he has in his trunk—ninety-five, and twenty more, besides a rouleau in mine; total, a hundred and sixteen thousand. I might take all, but I'll be bon prince, and leave him the fifty. The gold will pay my expenses here, and keep me going for a day or two, so there only remains to pack my portmanteau, settle my share of the bill, and tell them to call me to-morrow in time for the early train."

This sagaciously meditated programme was carried out to the letter, and on the following morning, while M. de Commercy was still in the land of dreams, the host of the "Stern," to whom his guest had communicated his intention of passing a few days at Strasburg, and subsequently rejoining the Count, graciously pocketed the sum of four hundred francs, representing, with sundry overcharges, one moiety of the collective account, and wished M. le Baron a "glückliche Reise."

About three hours after his departure, the night train from Paris steamed slowly into the Baden station. Among the passengers was a middle-aged individual, thin and wiry in person, with keen grey eyes and a prominent chin, who, being encumbered by no luggage beyond a small valise which he carried in his hand, sprang lightly from the carriage as it stopped, and removed his travelling-cap respectfully on recognising the juge d'instruction, who was awaiting his arrival on the platform. After a few words had been exchanged between them, the magistrate and Monsieur Chifflard (for he it was) at once proceeded in a droschke along the Lange Strasse and up the Graben to the

office of the commissary of police, where they both alighted, and were immediately admitted into that functionary's private sanctum. A quarter of an hour later the emissary of the Préfecture reappeared, accompanied by one of the local myrmidons, and the pair started together at a brisk pace towards the Gasthof zum Stern. When they reached the hotel the solitary waiter attached to the establishment was standing at the door, and in answer to their inquiry after the Comte de Commercy and the Baron de Brieg, informed them that the Herr Graf was still in bed, and could not be disturbed, and that the Herr Baron had left for Strasburg that morning. This having been explained to M. Chifflard by his guide, whose accomplishments included a limited smattering of barbaric French, the former authoritatively ordered the perplexed garçon to conduct him to the Count's room, and without further parley mounted the stairs, followed by the Baden policeman, the waiter being wedged in between the two like a sandwich. When they arrived at the first landing, M. Chifflard pointed interrogatively to an apartment facing them. The waiter nodded, and was forthwith dismissed to the regions below by his green-coated compatriot, who took up his station in the passage, while his companion coolly opened the door and walked in.

"Est-ce toi, Vincent?" said a voice from the bed, occupying a recess in the corner of the room.

"Not exactly, Monsieur le Comte," replied the detective. "My name is Chifflard, commonly called the 'Jovial;' and as we have a little business to transact together, and a friend of mine is waiting outside, I must trouble you to dispatch your toilette as quickly as possible, and hand over your keys in the meantime."

"Who are you, and what do you want?" exclaimed the astonished M. de Commercy.

"I have told you already who I am, and I want a hundred thousand francs, to begin with."

"Very likely," sneered the other. "Who doesn't?"

"Come, come, Monsieur Alphonse Dubourg," said the "Jovial," more seriously than he had hitherto spoken, "don't attempt to try it on with me. I wish to do my duty pleasantly; but I intend to do it, you understand; so I'll give you a bit of advice—don't force me to be disagreeable. Is this the key?" he continued, taking up one that lay on the table.

M. Dubourg not vouchsafing any reply, the detective, who had by this time placed the only visible article of luggage—a portmanteau—carefully on a chair, unlocked it, and commenced examining the contents in a thoroughly workmanlike manner; without, however, losing sight of its now utterly discomfited owner, who had at length risen from his couch, and stood watching the proceedings with a deplorably crestfallen air.

"You don't seem to get on very fast with your dressing," observed M. Chifflard, turning sharply round, and glancing significantly at his watch. "In five minutes we start, ready or not."

This hint had the instant effect of accelerating M. Dubourg's movements; and before the allotted interval had expired he was once more equipped in his old travelling suit, which he had instinctively substituted for Herr Schnipperle's glossy chef d'œuvre.

"Good!" remarked the detective, approvingly; "and better still," he added, as his nimble fingers extracted from the bottom of the portmanteau a roll of bank-notes, enveloped in a fragment of newspaper. "Fifty!" said he, when he had finished counting them. "Where are the others?"

"They ought to be in my pocket-book, but I don't see it," was the unsatisfactory answer. "I suppose the Baron—that is, Vincent—has taken it."

"Then it is far enough by this time," thought M. Chifflard. "Which way is he gone?" he resumed, aloud.

"Gone," echoed M. Dubourg, in a tone of indescribable amazement.

"Yes, gone," returned his questioner, angrily. "I suppose you'll tell me next that you don't know he has bolted."

"Bolted! You're joking!"

"You'll find it no joke, at all events, nor he either, when I catch him!" growled the detective, hastily stuffing coats and shirts pell-mell into the trunk; which he then locked, and consigned the key, together with the parcel of notes, to the security of his own pocket. "Now, en avant!" said he; and, shouldering the portmanteau, opened the door, and emerged with his prisoner into the passage, where the Baden policeman was stalking up and down like a sentry. Dispatching the latter in quest of a droschke, M. Chifflard then summoned the landlord, and informed him that the apartment was henceforth at his disposal.

"And my bill?" was that worthy's very natural question.

"That is no affair of mine," answered M. Dubourg's captor, shrugging his shoulders. "Où il n'y a rien, *l'aubergiste* perd ses droits."

With which consolatory version of a time-honoured saying he stepped into the carriage, whither his colleague and the soi-disant Comte de Commercy had already preceded him; and in another instant the trio were on their way to the Mairie.

* * * * * *

The examination of Alphonse Dubourg by the Commissary of Police, in the presence of the juge d'instruction and his subordinate, was brief but conclusive, the prisoner at once acknowledging himself guilty of the offence with which he was charged. The facts of the

case, according to his own voluntary confession, were as follows :— He had been employed for some months in the capacity of clerk in the banking-house of Messrs. Traite and Billet, and by his punctuality and strict attention to business had gradually found favour in the sight of the head cashier, by whom he was occasionally entrusted with sundry little commissions connected with his office. Shortly before his engagement he had become acquainted with a young man of irregular and dissolute habits, named Vincent Porreau ; and it was chiefly owing to his instigation that he had first conceived the idea of the audacious enterprise which chance alone enabled him to accomplish. On the Monday previous to his arrival in Baden, a sum of one hundred thousand francs in notes had been paid into the bank after the departure of the cashier, in whose absence the duty of seeing everything secure for the night necessarily devolved on the porter. Dubourg being the only member of the establishment besides himself still on the premises, and accustomed to assist him in similar emergencies, he requested him to lock the safe and bring him the key. This was accordingly done, but not before the hundred thousand francs had been dexterously transferred to the pocket of the clerk, who then wished the porter good night, and started at once in search of his associate, whom he persuaded without difficulty to join him in his expedition. After changing one of the notes for gold, they hurried to the Gare de l'Est in time to catch the mail train, and reached Strasburg early on the following morning, taking up their quarters at a small hotel near the railway. They then purchased two portmanteaux, linen, and other indispensable articles, and continued their journey in the afternoon as far as Achern, a station between Appenweier and Oos, where they slept. Next day they hired a carriage, ostensibly for the purpose of a short tour in the Black Forest, but, once clear of the village, directed the postilion to proceed to Baden-Baden, where they arrived on the Wednesday morning, as has been already related, without any settled plan beyond that of amusing themselves as long as the money lasted. When asked by the juge d'instruction how they could have imagined to escape discovery in so crowded and fashionable a place, Dubourg owned that his companion had urged him to select a less frequented resort, but that he himself had been attracted thither in the hope of doubling his capital at the trente et quarante : in which case, he added, his intention was to remit the hundred thousand francs anonymously to Messrs. Traite and Billet, and begin life anew with his share of the remainder. He ended by saying that the name of Commercy had been suggested to him by the station so called, and that a Swiss handbook in the hotel at Strasburg had furnished Porreau with the title of Baron de Brieg.

Immediately after his examination, and the production of the warrant

for his arrest signed by the Préfet de Police of Paris, Dubourg was delivered into the custody of the local authorities, and consigned to the town prison, there to await the conclusion of the necessary formalities relative to his extradition; and the detective, having satisfactorily accomplished one moiety of his task, retraced his steps, after a short consultation with the juge d'instruction, in the direction of the railway station.

"The other can't be far off," he soliloquised, as he strode rapidly on. "If the German wires are a trifle quicker than what they call their Eisenbahn, I ought to know which way to shape my course before night."

A few minutes brought him to the telegraph office, and ere long two messages, addressed respectively to Wiesbaden and Homburg, were speeding on their way.

"And now," said M. Chifflard, "that job being done, it is about time for me to think of breakfast, for except that cup of coffee at Kehl, I haven't tasted bit or sup since I started." Whereupon he turned into a tavern in the Lange Strasse, and having done ample justice to the klosen-suppe and the never-failing rindfleisch with horse-radish sauce, which form the staple of every German repast, strolled leisurely towards the promenade, and was soon enjoying his coffee and cigar with the air of a man who had earned a little relaxation, and was fully disposed to make the most of it.

It was late in the afternoon when he returned to the telegraph office, where a solitary dispatch awaited him; its laconic contents ran thus:

"Hôtel de Russie, Homburg."

"Bon," said M. Chifflard, rubbing his hands cheerfully; "that's what I call hitting the right nail on the head. When I've shown this to the judge, I shall be as free as air for the rest of the evening, and start comfortably to-night for Homburg by the twelve o'clock train."

Some eighteen hours later M. Vincent Porreau, much to his surprise, found himself in the same unpleasant position as that realised on the preceding day by his luckless colleague, and having been duly eased of the pocket-book and other private resources in his possession, amounting in all to nearly seventy thousand francs, had the mortification of exchanging his comfortable quarters at the Hôtel de Russie for the more secluded precincts of the Stadt-Gefängniss, where we will leave him to his own reflections.

The sequel may be told in few words. The extradition being at length authorised, the two culprits were, after the lapse of some weeks, conveyed in safe custody to Paris, and being finally brought

for trial before the tribunal of the Police Correctionnelle, were summarily condemned to five years' imprisonment; Dubourg at Poissy, and his associate in a similar place of confinement in the neighbourhood of the capital.

"Poor devils!" said M. Chifflard, who, after delivering his testimony as witness, had remained in court to listen to the verdict. "Five days out—five years in—not to mention the taste they have had of it already. 'Le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle!'"

C. H.

CHERRY STONES.

"What shall my lover be—soldier, priest or statesman?
How shall my lover be—handsome, brave, or wise?
Shall he bow before me as to his queen her vassal,
Or shall he reign a king in my adoring eyes?"

Counting her cherry stones, the little maiden muses,
All the world before her to choose as she will;
All the lovers ready to sue for her favour;
Naught but her own royal wishes to fulfil.

* * * * * *

By a fair spread table a lady sits all lonely;
Heaped on her crystal plate cherries ripe and red.
"Shall I count the stones as in my happy childhood,
Counting, not the living hopes, but the hopes long dead?"

Scornfully she asks herself, but the proud lip trembles;
Down the pallid cheek there steals a bitter tear:
The world that lay before her so bright in life's morning,
How has she found it? A barren world and drear.

What had the lover been who had come to woo her,
In the far-off days flown by on dusky wing?
Neither wise nor brave, and scarcely even handsome,
Not a loyal subject, nor yet an honoured king.

Wide the sea that parts them, cold wife and faithless husband;
Neither sons nor daughters gather at the board;
No small hands to count the stones when the fruit is eaten;
No child-lips to babble of life's golden hoard.

EMMA RHODES.

CINDERELLA.

HOW very many adventurous spirits went out to Australia during the prevalence of the gold-fever some twenty, or more, years ago, and went out to die, will never be disclosed.

Amidst others who went out, was one Philip Gay. A sanguine, hopeful young man, who thought that while it might take the best part of a life-time to make a fortune at civil engineering, he should pick up one in a year or two at the gold diggings. How full of hope he was when he sailed with some four or five other young men who made up his party, some of his acquaintances remember yet. He left his wife at home with her young baby; his wife who was just as full of hopeful visions as he was.

Of that party, Philip Gay was the first to die. His wife, stricken with the news, led a sort of half dead, half alive existence for a year or two, and then followed him to the unknown land that is at once so much nearer than that one of the gold mines, and so much farther off The baby-girl alone was left, the little Lucinda.

The child was not utterly destitute. A few hundred pounds remained to her, and one relative. This was Mrs. Munro; whose late husband, for she was a young widow also, had been Mrs. Gay's brother. Mrs. Munro was not left particularly well off herself: at any rate, her income was not large, and she had to be careful. Of course, being a provident and calculating lady, Mrs. Munro could not be expected to burden herself with the little orphan, Lucinda, and take her home to her own two daughters: she said so herself, and her friends agreed with her. So the little child was sent to a plain school to be brought up in a plain manner; to defray the cost of which the few hundred pounds had to be trenched upon.

"The money must be made go as far as it will," said Mrs. Munro, "and then we shall see."

Lucinda was seventeen when the last pound came to an end, and she was sent home to Mrs. Munro.

"And what on earth's to be done with her I can't tell," observed Mrs. Munro to her daughters, Elizabeth and Laura. "We must keep her here for a little while, just to see what she's made of and what she's fit for, and then get her a situation of some kind."

"You can make her useful while she stays here," observed Elizabeth, who was three-and-twenty years of age, and very practical.

A particularly welcome suggestion indeed to Mrs. Munro. She was no better off than some of her neighbours in the matter of domestics. She professed to keep two, a cook and a housemaid: but whether she

was a bad manager and mistress, or whether she had the ill-luck to get a succession of bad servants, certain it was that the domestic department was generally in a state of ferment. The said servants were changed continually; sometimes there would be two; sometimes only one, sometimes none: and the result was much dissatisfaction and discomfort. The two young ladies, fashionably educated, bristling to the fingers' ends with accomplishments, could not be expected to look after brooms and brushes, plates and dishes: and Mrs. Munro was often at her wits' ends, and could not imagine what the world was coming to.

Lucinda Gay arrived at Milthorp Lodge—as their pretty country home was named. It stood very close to the little town of Milthorp; ten minutes' walk from it. A gentle, timid, graceful girl of seventeen; with a fair, delicate, placid face, bright hair, and a steadfast look in the large grey eyes.

"Dear, dear! the very eyes of your poor father, my dear!" sighed Mrs. Munro, who in the main was not by any means bad-hearted; and would not have been short-tempered but for her domestic trials. "You get more and more like him, child. Kiss your cousin, girls."

Elizabeth and Laura did as they were told, and kissed Lucinda. They were both good looking, showy young women.

Well, not to make a short story long, Lucinda Gay's abode at Milthorp Lodge grew into a permanency. Little by little also, the *work* grew upon her. From having at first been required to help only in light duties, she found herself at last to all intents and purposes a servant: kept from morning till night at hard work. This was the effect of necessity, more than of actual wish or intention on Mrs. Munro's part. The servants got worse and worse, each succeeding one that came in turned out to be more incapable than her predecessor; and who was there but Lucinda to fall back upon? By the time the girl had been there a few months, she seemed to have settled down to this hopeless life of slaving in the kitchen and waiting upon others. Elizabeth and Laura playfully called her Cinderella: when in a very good humour with her, Cindy.

Once, and once only, the girl remonstrated with Mrs. Munro. "I don't like the life, aunt," she said: "I never expected to have to do such things. Don't you think you could let me go out somewhere?"

"What to do?" asked Mrs. Munro. "As servant?"

"Oh no,"—blushing painfully—"not as servant."

"But you could not be a governess. You have no accomplishments."

"I fancy sometimes that I could make money by my drawings, aunt. No one in the school could draw as I did."

"Draw! school!" repeated Mrs. Munro. "You did not learn drawing at school. You did not learn any superfluous thing of that kind that had to be paid for."

"Yes, I did. It happened in this way, aunt. I used to copy the girls' drawings out of school; it was all my pastime; and one day the master saw some that I had done, and he asked to speak to me. Then he told Mrs. Cheshunt I had so decided a talent for the art he would like to give me lessons for nothing, that I might do him credit. After that, I always went in with the rest. Do you know what he said when I left, aunt?"

"What did he say?"

"That I might rise to have a name in the world of art if I practised diligently."

"And how in the world would you live while you practised it, Cindy?" demanded Mrs. Munro.

Cindy looked distressed.

"My dear, don't you be ungrateful. Remember your poor father. He took up flighty notions and schemes—and he paid for it with his life. For goodness' sake, don't you turn flighty, Cindy, and follow his example."

The tears gathered in Lucinda's eyes, and she said no more. Like all people who have a good and tender heart, ingratitude appeared to her to be one of the very worst of sins.

So from that day she settled down to her lot, resigned outwardly if not inwardly. All the spare moments she could snatch from her duties, were spent in her own room, drawing in private. Elizabeth and Laura went out to fêtes and dances and entertainments. Poor Lucinda was never asked to go with them; she had no toilette for it: and if at times a longing for a little change came over her spirit, a sense of neglect that somehow did not seem right, she shut herself in with her paper and pencils and forgot the slight.

And thus things went on for about a twelvemonth from the time of the girl's first arrival at Milthorp. Day by day she seemed to be separated more and more from her cousins; between her condition and theirs a greater and greater barrier grew. Lucinda would sometimes ask herself whether things were to go on thus for ever.

II.

It had been a long, hot, July day. The sun had gone down in a blaze of glory; a soft purple haze lay low in the valleys. All the doors and windows of Milthorp Lodge were thrown open to catch the grateful cool of the evening. In the large old-fashioned porch sat Elizabeth with a book: Laura lay back on the sofa indoors, fanning herself languidly.

Cindy, in the kitchen, had just finished washing up and putting away the tea-things. Just now they enjoyed the services of a

particularly incapable help-mate, who impeded work, rather than did it; and all the labour fell on Cindy. For many months now Mrs. Munro had not attempted to keep more than one servant: her niece filled the place of the second.

Cindy took off her large apron, went out of doors, and ventured to seat herself on a garden bench under the wall behind the porch. She possessed this one peculiarity—though they did call her Cinderella: that she was always nice and neat. Her dresses were of the cheapest materials—cottons, thin stuffs: but somehow she kept them fresh and well. Not a spot was on her naturally delicate hands this evening as she sat down; not a hair out of place on her pretty head.

The small iron gate, hidden by the trees and shrubbery, was heard to open and footsteps to approach: and the postman came into view, with his bundle of letters.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Munro, seeing him from the window. "What can the man be coming here so late for? Postman," she added, walking forth to the porch, "what brings you here at this time of night?"

"An accident to a goods train, which blocked up the line, ma'am," replied the man, as he detached a letter from his bundle and handed it to her. "It has delayed the delivery several hours."

She sat down at the entrance of the porch, nearest the light, put on her spectacles, and opened her letter. It appeared to be rather a short one, and Mrs. Munro read it twice over.

"I'm sure I don't know what to say about it!" she exclaimed, in self-soliloquy. "I should like it well enough: but—I hardly know."

Elizabeth Munro, apathetical as usual, went on reading, showing no curiosity. Laura came out, twirling her fan.

"Who is your letter from, mamma?"

"Why, from Emma Allardeen. She says her brother wants a spell of country air, after his recent illness, and she was so happy here during her week's visit to us two years ago, that she ventures to hope we will receive him. And here's a little twisted note inside from himself, asking if I will be bothered with him for a month or two."

"I should let him come," observed Laura—who had a faint recollection of an exceedingly good-looking and attractive man in young Allardeen, and was ever open to the prospect of a flirtation.

"But think of the trouble!" cried Elizabeth, too strong-minded to have latent views of lovers. "It would be quite a restraint to have to entertain a sick man for two months!"

"I don't suppose he is ill now, Lizzie," observed her mother. "What *I* think of, girls, is the extra work it would entail. And of all wretched, incapable creatures, that Susan who is with us now is the worst!"

"Stuff!" said Laura, slightingly. "There's Cinderella."

"What do you think, Cindy, dear?" cried Mrs. Munro, in a soft, coaxing tone. "Would you mind a little more trouble for a short while? What is the matter, Lucinda?"

The young girl had her speaking face turned to them, all eagerness and excitement.

"Is it William Allardeen the painter, aunt, that you are speaking of?"

"To be sure it is, child."

"Oh, but he is a great man; a true artist. I went to see one or two of his paintings once; they were in a collection of pictures that was being exhibited. The school all went. Aunt Munro, I would not mind what work I did for him; I'd never think of the trouble."

"That's all right, Cindy: I thought you'd be reasonable. Girls, I shall write my answer to-night, and tell him to come."

And in the course of a few days he did come, this William Allardeen. A handsome, manly-looking fellow, in spite of his recent illness, of some thirty years. Well-born and well-bred, he had some blue blood in his veins. And he had something better—a good honest heart.

He was not an amateur—he painted for money. Perhaps it would be better to say he painted for love—love of the art—and sold his pictures afterwards. Being entirely independent as to fortune, he could afford time to do good work, and to do it well. Full of all beautiful enthusiasms, with an eye that was quick to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to feel whatever was best worth seeing and hearing and feeling, was it any wonder that he was sweet-tempered and charming, and that he brought into the house a glow brighter than that of the summer sunshine?

Was it strange that, ere he had been at Milthorp Lodge a week, there should be fluttering in the dove-cote?

Laura Munro was beautiful, and she knew it, and meant to make the most of it. Beautiful with mere physical beauty—the beauty of roundness and colouring, of pink and white skin, blue eyes and golden hair. She was not going to marry a small Milthorp landowner, to superintend his dairy, attend to her own babies, vegetate within the prosy doors of her dull home from the first of January to the thirty-first of December, and have a new silk gown once a year—not she She was waiting for the prince to come and array her in satins and laces and jewels. But she was not so foolish as to say this, even in whispers; and to all appearance she was sweet simplicity itself, guileless and unsophisticated as a child. For she thought the prince had come in the guise of William Allardeen.

As for Cindy, we have seen what her ambition was—to become an artist. Not that the ambition had taken any very tangible form as yet. Fortune had given this girl, who had never seen more than two or three really fine pictures in her life, whose knowledge of the miracles

of art was confined to a few engravings and photographs, an instinctive love of form and colour, and a burning eagerness to reproduce them. The creative instinct was strong within her. She drew at first, as the birds sing, from pure love, with no thought of what might come of it. Upstairs in her own room there was one bureau drawer filled with pieces. Card-board, drawing-paper, and what not, were covered with pencillings, outlines—hints of the glowing life of the girl's heart and brain. There were crude attempts at colour, too; here a flower, there a spray of grasses; now a child's face, and then a bird with folded wings. There were glimpses of sunset skies; and there was one stretch of blue sea, with a lone ship fading in the distance.

The coming of Mr. Allardeen to the house was a great event for this inexperienced girl. How good-looking he was! how noble! and what a pleasant expression sat on his face! As yet Lucinda had not spoken to him. On account of Susan's incapacity, she had to cook a great part of the dinner herself, send in the breakfast and the lunch—and, of course, as Mrs. Munro said to her, she could not be dressed to sit down with them. "My little niece, who is here to help the servants," Mrs. Munro carelessly said to her guest one day, when Cindy was seen in the garden picking gooseberries for dessert. "You knew, when you were a boy, that poor mistaken Philip Gay, who threw up his business to go out after gold, and died. That's his daughter. She has not a farthing in the world, and I give her a home."

"Philip Gay!" repeated Mr. Allardeen. "What a nice fellow he was! I remember him well, and his kindness to me. One day I had been wicked and played truant from school, and he saved me from punishment."

That was all that was said. The young ladies were too fond of taking up Mr. Allardeen's attention themselves to allow him time to waste it on Cindy.

One day Laura came running to him with a pretty affectation of simplicity.

"Oh, Mr. Allardeen," she said, clasping her hands, "if you would only teach me how to draw! I have wanted to learn all my life. That which the stupid people teach us here is not to be called drawing. You should see my ridiculous efforts. Maybe," she went on, naively, dropping her eyelids till the long lashes swept her cheeks, "maybe I could appreciate your work better if I should try my hand at it as *you* could teach me, and learn some of its difficulties."

Mr. Allardeen laughed outright. The very simplicity of the request amused him. Genuine to the backbone himself, he never could suspect artfulness in others.

"Very well, Miss Laura. It is a bargain. In return, you shall be my guide to all that is beautiful and picturesque in this wild region."

"Oh, thank you," she cried. "I have been longing to show you some lovely scenery ever since you came, but feared you would think me intrusive if I offered. There is a beautiful spot a mile off, called the Sunset Beacon: if you like, Mr. Allardeen, we will go there this evening."

Poor Cindy! For the first time in her life she felt envy: she envied Elizabeth and Laura. This new hero of theirs was no less a hero to her. As for loving him, she would as soon have thought of loving a star, or the sun itself, so far did he seem removed from her. But this man was the embodiment of all her dreams. He did with easy, careless grace—the ease and grace of a god, it seemed to her—the very things that she longed to do. He conceived and executed those magnificent pictures that the world talked of and gazed at. He lived in the ideal life that she longed for and dreamt of. It was hard to be making tarts for dinner, while Laura, in the prettiest of morning dresses, wandered over the hills, or sought out fairy nooks with her new drawing-master.

One day Lucinda was bending over the stewpan on the fire, stirring a custard slowly round, and trying to recall the blithe content of her school-days, when Mr. Allardeen paused outside the open window, and glanced in. He stood in the shadow of the climbing honeysuckle, that made the window like a lovely picture in a green frame. Lucinda's cheeks were flushed, her hair lay back from her forehead, in her soft grey eyes there sat a troubled light, and she seemed thoroughly uncomfortable.

"It is very warm to-day, Miss Cinderella."

Cinderella! Even he, then, recognised her low position, and could give her no better name than this mocking one. The flush on her cheeks deepened to crimson; her eyelids were lowered to hide the tears in her eyes.

"Yes, it is," she humbly assented.

"What a shame!" he thought; as his quick eye took note of everything, and the young girl's tired face. "Do you like doing all this, Miss Cinderella?"

"I have to do it," she quietly said. "There's no one else."

"Where's Susan? I should think she might be over that hot fire, instead of you."

"Susan's in the back garden, picking the peas for dinner. My aunt tried to teach her to cook, but Susan could not learn. I caught it up directly," she said.

"And therefore you have to do it. I wish you could come into the garden and sit in those shady glades instead. That would be better, would it not, Miss Cinderella?"

"Oh, yes. But"—his tone was so unmistakably kind, so sympathising, that she took courage to finish the sentence she had begun—"why do you call me Cinderella?"

Mr. Allardeen paused in surprise. "Is not Cinderella your name?"

She lifted the stewpan off the fire, for the custard was completed, and turned her tearful eyes on him, shaking her head.

"Your aunt and cousins call you Cinderella and—and Cindy. I never supposed it was not your name."

"As I am here amidst the cooking and the saucepans they call me so. My name is Lucinda."

"What an *awful* shame!" thought Mr. Allardeen again. "And what beautiful eyes!—just like poor Gay's. I remember his."

"Well, you must pardon me for the error I fell into, Miss Lucinda. I am very sorry."

"It would not have mattered. Only I—I thought you did it to mock me."

"Mock you! No, I should certainly not do that. I hope I should not mock anyone, least of all you. Do you know that I was well acquainted with your father?"

"Oh, were you!" she answered, her eyes smiling brightly through her wet eyelashes. "If he had but lived!"

"Ah!—if he had but lived! You would not be—doing what you are doing. Do you never come out in the garden for relief—say at the cool of the evening?"

"I used to: but just now there's a great deal to do. Sometimes after dusk I can snatch a few minutes there."

"Because I was thinking that if you did come I might have told you many little things about your father. He was my good friend when I was a boy."

"How I should like it! Yes, perhaps some evening I may be able to come out and listen to you."

"I hope you will. He was my friend; and I should like, if I may, to be yours. He, the man, was kind to me, the lad; I, a man now, would serve his child."

Mr. Allardeen lifted his hat, and walked away. He began to think he might be hindering her. What a terrible shame it was that so gentle, delicate a girl should have to spend her days at this rough, unfit work! he thought. If poor Philip Gay, who was essentially a gentleman, and had loved to smooth the path of all around him, could but rise from his grave and witness it! And for them to call her Cinderella!

From that day Mr. Allardeen sought opportunities to speak to the girl: many a time did he halt, as now, outside the open kitchen window, which looked to the side of the house and the more retired part of the garden. Once or twice he had found her outside at dusk, and they had paced the shrubbery together for five minutes, talking of her late father. The appellation, Cinderella, had grown into a jest

between them: and she had not the least objection now to hear it from his lips: liked it, in fact.

One morning at breakfast an expedition was proposed to Darley Wood, a welcome place of sweet shade at a mile or two's distance. The Miss Palmers (neighbours' daughters) and their brothers would go with them; and Mr. Allardeen would take his sketch-book. Sandwiches and biscuits would supply the place of lunch, and they could stay out all day if they chose. Presently Mr. Allardeen took the broad path that led past the kitchen, and halted at the open window.

"Cinderella," said he, in a low, pleasant, laughing tone, as he lingered over the word, and leaned his head in to see her cutting bread-and-butter for the sandwiches, in her fresh and pretty cotton dress, with the blue bow at her neck. "We are not going to the prince's ball, but we are going to spend the day in Darley Wood. Those cool, green, silent shades will be delightful in such heat as this. Can you not go with us."

Ah, if she could! she longed for it unutterably. Mr. Allardeen did not see the hot tears that sprung to her eyes, for she turned round to conceal them.

"Thank you: I wish I could," she answered quietly.

"It will be more agreeable there than in your kitchen. Shall I ask Mrs. Munro to let you come?"

"No, thank you; it would be of no use. I could not go to-day."

"Well, I should have thought this would be an excellent opportunity, with all of us away; there will be no meals to prepare."

Lucinda shook her head. "Indeed it is not convenient to-day," she said with a smile. "Some other time, perhaps."

Why should she tell him that there was the day's regular work to do, and that Susan was so useless? That there were also raspberries to be picked over and preserved, and a cake and tarts to make, and the late dinner to be prepared? What could he understand about it? The worst of it was, these things had never seemed so burdensome to her before, never so distasteful. The cool fresh green of the woods and valleys, and to watch him sketching—oh, what a contrast.

Wishing her good morning, Mr. Allardeen turned away. As soon as he was out of sight she sat down and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Cinderella! Yes; she was only Cinderella, and never would be anything else. She had not a cross stepmother; she had no cruel sisters. But her aunt kept her to this lowering work; and her cousins danced and dressed, and could spend their hot days in the green dells in idleness, Mr. Allardeen their companion. Alas! she had no fairy godmother to come to her rescue as the other Cinderella had.

Drying her eyes, she went on with her work. Setting-to with a wil

Lucinda got it done quickly, so as to obtain an hour in the afternoon for herself. Once amid her little paintings and sketches, she was happy. She would have been quite happy if she might but have shared in the benefit of Mr. Allardeen's instruction, as Laura daily did. But of course it was not to be thought of. He knew nothing about her being able to draw: and she would have had no time to take his instructions, had he been willing to give them.

As to these lessons of Laura's, all the house felt some curiosity in regard to them. Elizabeth openly declared that at school Laura had displayed no more talent for drawing than she herself did for music: and, as everybody knew, Elizabeth did not know one note from another: and Lucinda did think it queer that a talent should be developed suddenly and spontaneously. At school Laura could not draw a map, or the simplest figure in geometry: at music she was clever.

Laura took her lessons from Mr. Allardeen in quite an unusual manner. She would not, and did not, draw before him; she was too shy; but she watched him draw sketches himself and listened as he showed her how she should touch this, fill in that. Every third or fourth morning Laura would come into his sitting-room with her carefully-locked portfolio, unlock it, and take out a sketch for his inspection that she had just completed. Over and over again Mr. Allardeen expressed himself astonished at the undoubted talent displayed: and would praise it highly, while Laura listened with shy, downcast eyes, and the softest blush on her white-rose cheeks.

"I cannot understand it, Laura," he more than once observed. "Talent—nay, I may say genius, for it is nothing less—such as you display, ought to have found its vent earlier. When I was a little lad I used to do crude things with my pencil; could not help doing them; and I should have expected you to do the same. True genius cannot be kept in."

"I was not well—taught—and I grew discouraged," murmured Laura. "But for you, I might never have found it out."

He shook his head, unconvinced. As he said, he could not understand it.

"It is a singular thing, this new talent of Laura's for drawing!" observed Elizabeth one afternoon that she had bade Lucinda come to her room and give her hair a brush. "She never had a talent for anything, except making the most of her beauty and dressing herself to advantage. Take care, Cindy, you are hurting me."

"Have you seen her sketches?" asked Cindy. "I wish she would show them to me! she knows how I delight in seeing good drawings."

"Not I. She won't show them to anybody. It's all put on, her modesty: just to look well in William Allardeen's eyes. But he does praise her work, and no mistake: he says it is wonderful, admirable.

There, that will do, Cindy: you've brushed long enough. And now get my peach muslin, and try and pull out the bows a bit."

The weeks went on. A grand picnic was organised for a distance; some twenty people to share in it. Preparations were made in the shape of good dishes, Mrs. Munro's share of them being chiefly performed by Lucinda: the day arrived, and they started an hour after breakfast. Mr. Allardeen had ventured to say something about poor Miss Gay's making one of the party; but Mrs. Munro assured him that she could not be spared.

As desired by her aunt, Lucinda took the opportunity to put Mr. Allardeen's sitting-room to rights, and give it a thorough dusting, when, to her excessive surprise, Mr. Allardeen entered.

"Why!" she exclaimed, in her astonishment. "Is it *you?* What have you come back for?" He laughed.

"To catch you in the midst of your sins, Miss Cinderella. What were you doing in my room?"

"Putting it straight," she answered. "My aunt told me to do it."

"Then you will have the goodness not to do it any more: and to put that duster out of your hand. I cannot allow young ladies to go down on their knees for me."

She blushed a good deal. Her heart was beating violently. Taking the duster with her, she was turning to leave the room, when her eye was caught by a small exquisite water-colour drawing, which Mr. Allardeen inadvertently disclosed to view in moving some papers on a side table.

"Oh, how beautiful!" was her involuntary exclamation. "May I just look at it?"

He put it into her hands, and watched the delighted expression of her countenance as she examined it in silence.

"You are fond of drawings!" he said.

Fond! That was not the word for it. By the few remarks she made, he soon found she understood art fairly well, and that it was her chief enjoyment in life. He said no more, however, then, and Lucinda left the room.

The cause of his return was very simple: calling at the post-office (to which his letters were sometimes addressed) as he went with the picnic party through the town, he found an important letter waiting for him, which required an immediate answer. To the dismay of some of the party, for Mr. Allardeen was a general favourite, he turned back home to write it.

"But you won't be long, Mr. Allardeen?" cried Laura. "We had better wait here for you?"

"Certainly not. Your carriages can go on. I will charter a horse and come after you."

"Be sure and make him go fast," called out Laura, innocently silly, as usual.

Mr. Allardeen wrote his answer, and took it to the post-office. Again Lucinda supposed he had left for the day. She was snatching a few minutes' rest under the shady trees in the pleasant morning air, when he came striding up the path.

"Are you—not going to join them?" questioned Lucinda timidly.

"I think not. The man at the inn has no horse that I particularly care to mount."

The answer brought her some sudden perplexity: if Mr. Allardeen stayed at home, he would want lunch and dinner. What was to be done? Nothing had been ordered. She and Susan had both thought they were free from such cares for the day.

"Would you like to come in and look at my portfolio of drawings, Miss Lucinda?"

"Oh, if I might!" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushed.

They went in through the glass doors. He opened his portfolio and carelessly exposed its treasures. Lucinda stood entranced: for how long, she hardly knew. She had an artist's eye: the very few remarks she made told him that.

"Here's one of rather more pretension," he said, throwing open the door of a small closet; in which, on a shelf, stood a covered drawing, leaning against the wall. "Did you look at it when you were here this morning?"

"Indeed, no. I should not open the doors of your private places."

"This is no Bluebeard's closet. Look there."

Putting up the tissue paper which covered it, the drawing, a water-colour, stood out to view.

It was a quaint old kitchen; dim, shadowy, lighted only by the embers on the hearth. Leaning against the stone jamb of the great fire-place, with a weary look upon her young face, and her hands clasped despondingly, stood an unmistakable Cinderella.

It was not very light, and Lucinda took in nothing at first but a general idea of the power and pathos of the picture, holding her breath for very delight, while Mr. Allardeen watched her eagerly. Her eye wandered over the canvas, grasping detail after detail; then to the name at the top, "Cinderella," then to the girl's drooping figure. After gazing silently, she uttered a faint exclamation, while the red blood fled from her cheeks, and she burst into tears. Cinderella's face was her own face: *she* was the Cinderella.

"Have I vexed you?" he asked. "I did not mean to. If I have you must forgive me."

"No, no, I am not vexed," she answered, subduing her tears. "Just when I saw her standing there, I felt a great pity, and thought, 'Oh, she

has to be in the kitchen as I have.' And the next moment I saw it was myself, and—and—it is nothing, Mr. Allardeen, but life does seem hard at times."

"You would rather pass your days in an artist's studio than in custard-making, Miss Lucinda."

"Please don't talk of it. Oh!" she exclaimed, starting, as the little clock on the mantel-piece struck one. "I did not think it was half so late."

"And what if it is? Where are you going? You have not seen all the drawings."

"But there's lunch to be thought of, and dinner ——"

"Dinner be dispensed with," he interrupted laughing. "Lunch also. Confess, now—you were not going to prepare dinner for yourself."

"No, there's cold meat for me and Susan. But now you have come home ——"

"Now I have come I shall eat cold meat too. And if you don't like that, Miss Lucinda, I'll touch nothing but bread-and-butter."

"But my aunt will be so angry with me!"

"Leave her anger to me."

That was a red-letter day for Lucinda. She would never in all her life forget it. After revelling amidst the sketches, Mr. Allardeen made her sit out under the trees, now reading snatches of poetry to her, now talking to her unrestrainedly in his pleasant voice. By the time evening came, Lucinda seemed to have known him for years.

But she had not had the courage to tell him that she drew herself. She longed to tell him; and two or three times the words had risen to the tip of her tongue; only to be suppressed.

On the afternoon of the day following this, Mr. Allardeen sat in the large arbour, reading letters that the day mail had brought him. Leaning back comfortably in the rustic summer-house, a cigar in his mouth, he folded up his letters, and then took up the newly arrived *Art Journal*. Hearing footsteps approach, he looked up and saw Laura advancing, portfolio in hand.

"I don't expect you want to see me one bit," she said, throwing back her head childishly and her pretty hair. "Especially just when you have your letters. But I came nevertheless. I do so want you to tell me what is the trouble with this sketch. I can't get it to suit me. Oh, Mr. Allardeen," and she laid her fingers upon the tip of his coat-sleeve, appealingly, "what shall I do when you go away, and I have no one to help me? You have added so much to my life!"

He made no reply—ungallant fellow that he was—as he threw away his cigar, took the little sketch, or design, from her hand, and glanced at it carelessly. But in a moment he lost his listless air, pushed back

the hair from his forehead, laid the bit of drawing paper on the table before him, and bent over it.

"This design is remarkable, very remarkable for the work of a beginner, Laura," he said, at length. "You are a perpetual surprise to me. You have such a way of getting at the heart of things. What do you mean by this sketch? Put your thought into words."

He was surprised—puzzled, for he thought the drawing wonderful. No man could be blind to Laura's beauty; William Allardeen had enjoyed it, as he enjoyed a lovely picture. But he had soon discovered, or thought he had, that with all her little gushes of sentiment, her artless candour, she had no more soul than the Venus de' Medici. A woman without a soul could not make these sketches, as he believed. Those she brought to him, day after day, betrayed a power of thought, a depth of feeling and insight, quite beyond his comprehension. The execution was often faulty—but the power was there undeniably. And this was the best of them all.

"You meant something by this," he went on, as she did not speak. "You were not simply making a picture. I think I read your idea. But tell me what it was?"

A step sounded on the gravel-walk: Lucinda going by to pick some parsley. Laura hastily gathered up her papers; she never would let anyone see them, save Mr. Allardeen: but by some means this one sketch fell, and the wind wafted it to Lucinda's feet.

"Don't touch it, don't touch it," shrieked Laura. But Lucinda, meaning no harm, was too quick for her, and had picked it up.

"Why, this is mine!" cried Lucinda in astonishment, her eye kindling with a sudden light. "Where did you find it, Laura? You must have got it from my room. And what right have you to show my things to Mr. Allardeen?"

"It is not yours, it is mine," retorted Laura, who had turned as white as a sheet: while Mr. Allardeen, singularly interested, stood at the door and looked on. "*Mine.* I drew it myself. How dare you assert ridiculous falsehoods?"

Lucinda coloured painfully. She had drawn part of that sketch yesterday at sunset, and filled it in at dawn this morning. But she would not betray Laura.

"Let it pass, then," she said, and would have turned away to get the parsley.

But Mr. Allardeen stopped her, laying his hand upon the portfolio. "This can hardly be a mistake," he said, gently. "It is better to have an understanding on the spot. Do you say this drawing is yours, Miss Gay: that you did it?"

Lucinda looked at Laura imploringly, but the latter stood sullen and silent as a statue.

"I ask whether you did it, Miss Gay. Did you do this?—and this?" taking others from the portfolio. "Speak out."

Lucinda took the sketch from his hand. Down in one corner, following the outline of a plantain leaf, she pointed to certain minute characters. Looking attentively, he read the name "Cinderella." Turning, he looked at Laura.

"Some mistake," she faltered, hands and lips alike trembling; "I must have taken up Cindy's instead of my own." Yes, she had taken Cindy's sketches out of her room and exhibited them as her own.

What passed in the next few minutes Lucinda could hardly ever recall. It was like a bewildering dream. Laura had disappeared, leaving the portfolio: on every sketch within it was the private mark, "Cinderella." In her own sweet humility she would not have dared to show them to Mr. Allardeen. But now he had seen them, had praised them, had spoken the kindest, dearest words of hope and encouragement. He had recognized in her, partly untaught, untrained as she was, something akin to his own genius. Was it any wonder that at last she laid her head on the table and cried, partly with joy, partly at the discomfort touching Laura. William Allardeen laid his hand gently on her head.

"Don't cry, Cinderella. You have surely found your fairy godmother."

Whether she had found her fairy godmother or not, she had found *him*.

"Which will you do, my dear one," he whispered. "Stay in the kitchen here?—or come with me to live at an artist's studio?"

"I—I daresay it was a mistake," she pleaded, trembling and blushing. "Please don't tell of Laura."

"Never mind Laura; we can do without her. I want you, Lucinda. Ah, my dear one, the first hour I saw you, with your father's wonderful eyes, my heart went out to you. Will you come to me to my studio, and be my dear wife?—my very own little Cinderella?"

Cinderella burst into tears, and hid her face in his arms. By-and-by, Susan came clattering down to see what had become of the parsley.

"Well, and I declare I'm glad of it!" honestly spoke Mrs. Munro, when matters were disclosed to her. "Though I believe Laura did look upon him as sure to be hers, I'm glad of it. It's a first-rate match for Cindy. And I'm afraid, what with the kitchen and other things, life here was rather hard for her at times."

THE NIGHT COMETH.

COMETH the night wherein no man may labour,
Therefore we work while yet the day is light ;
To thee, to me, to foeman, friend and neighbour
Cometh the night—the night.

Toil on—toil on, nor dally with the morning,
Sweet syren couching in a thousand snares,
Faithless she flies—scanty and brief her warning—
Leaving thee unawares.

Then am'rous breath of noon will tempt to pleasure,
And ease and rest, until the heat be past ;—
Arise, and work ! We have no time for leisure
Whose sky is overcast.

Aye, overcast. Tho' morn be sweet and pleasant,
And later noon shall offer fresh delight,
He surely sees, who looks beyond the present,
The shadow of the night.

Terrible night to those with task half ended,
Who revel careless thro' the rosy hours ;
Leaving the corn, the goodly corn, untended,
To gather in the flow'rs :

Which close, or droop, or die when eve advances,
And lo, the sorry harvest withered lies ;
And phantoms of lost hope, lost time, lost chances
Out of the gloom arise.

Not so comes night to all. Sweet sleep will strengthen
Toilers with burden of the day opprest ;
To whom the evening shadows, while they lengthen,
Bring peace, and hard-won rest.

Oh, welcome rest for weary hearts and aching,
And wounded feet all travel-stained and sore ;
Welcome the rest,—thrice welcome the awaking,
Never to need it more.

Work then, nor fear the struggle and the labour ;
For tho', maybe, the day yet seemeth bright,
To thee, to me, to foeman, friend and neighbour
Cometh the night—the night.

S. E. G.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J. SWAIN.

AT EAGLES' NEST.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1876.

EDINA.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MEETING AGAIN.

TIME flew. Summer had come round again: and it was now close upon three years since Mrs. Raynor and her children had quitted Eagles' Nest. Certainly, affairs could not be said to be progressing with them: rather the contrary. The past winter and spring had brought trouble. All the three younger children were attacked with scarlatina, and it had left Kate so long ill that much care had to be taken with her. Mrs. Raynor was laid up at the same time for several weeks with bronchitis; and the whole of the nursing fell upon Edina. Sickness entails expense; not only as regards medical attendance, but in other ways: as those who have experienced it and who possess but a shallow purse can only too well testify.

With so much on her hands, and Mrs. Raynor laid by, Edina could not continue to do the work by which they were helped to live. A little of it she did continue to take, but it was very little: and she had to sit up at night and steal hours from her needful rest to accomplish even so much. This did not please the proprietors of the warehouse that supplied her with it; they evidently did not care to continue to supply her at all; and when things got round again, and she and Mrs. Raynor would have been glad to do the same quantity of work as before, the work was not given them to do. Whether it was, as the warehouse people protested, that the work was growing scarce through change of fashion and consequent lack of demand, or whether it was that the people preferred to employ those whose industry was not interrupted by sickness or else, the result came to the same: the employment failed.

And this, in these early days of June, was the state of affairs: the family pinching and starving more than ever, for during the time of sickness Edina's private funds had been anticipated and debts contracted, and the work failing. Charles was wearing out his days at the office; Alice was teaching at Mrs. Preen's. Never had the future looked so dark as it was looking now.

This fact was very present to Edina. Albeit not one to despair beforehand, or to meet trouble half way, she could not avoid apprehensions for the future. Money was wanted in so many ways—extra money—and they had it not. Mrs. Raynor was very delicate, requiring wine and other luxuries; the children wanted good nourishment in the shape of meat, and they could not get it. The common provisions within their reach were ominously dear, and seemed to get dearer every week.

One day when they were at dinner—such dinner as it was—Alice came in. Perhaps the little pinched faces around the scanty board—and both Kate's and Robert's did look pinched—struck unpleasantly upon Alice, for she was evidently in less good spirits than usual. She had come down by the omnibus, and taken them by surprise.

"Not anything at all for me, thank you, Edina," she said, as Edina was placing a chair for her at the table. "Mrs. Preen made me take some bread-and-butter before I came out, and I shall have some meat with my tea."

An idea, like a fear, flashed into the mind of Mrs. Raynor. It was so very unusual for Alice to come down in this unexpected manner. "You have brought bad news, child!" she faintly said. "What is it?"

And, for answer, Alice burst into tears. The knowledge of their home privations was to her as a very nightmare, for she had a feeling heart. What with that and other thoughts, her spirits were never high now.

"I don't know how to tell it you," she sobbed; "but it is what I am come to do. Mamma, I am going to leave Mrs. Preen's."

Mrs. Raynor sank back in her chair. "Oh, child! For any fault?"

Not for any fault, Alice went on to explain, as she dried her eyes. Mrs. Preen, who had not been in strong health lately, was ordered for a lengthened term to her native place, Devonshire, where she would stay with her mother. She could not make it convenient to take her two elder little girls with her, neither did she care to leave them at home during her absence. So they were to be placed at school, and Alice had received notice to quit at the end of a month.

"If I were sure of getting another situation at once, I would not mind it so much," she said. "But it is the uncertainty that frightens me. I cannot afford to be out of a situation."

"Misfortunes never come alone," sighed Mrs. Raynor.

"Let us hope for the best," said Edina briskly, as she began putting the plates and dishes together to be carried away. "A whole month is a good while, Alice, and we can begin to make inquiries for you at once. Perhaps Mr. Jones at the library can hear of something. I will speak to him: he is very kind and friendly."

"Do you ever come across that Bill Stane now, Alice?" burst out Alfred, as he picked up his cap to go off to school. "We saw in the paper that Sir Philip was dead. That is, we saw something about his will."

"He comes now and then to Mrs. Preen's," replied Alice, blushing vividly, for she could not hear William Stane's name without emotion. "What did you see about Sir Philip's will?" she added, in the most careless voice she could call up.

"Oh, I don't know—how his money was left, I think. Charley reckoned up that Bill Stane would have ten thousand pounds to his share. Charley says he is getting on at the Bar like a house on fire."

"Shall you not be late, Alfred?"

"I am off now. Good-bye, Alice. It will be jolly, you know, if you come home."

"Not jolly for the dinners," put in poor Katie, who had learnt by sad experience what a vast difference one extra made.

"Oh, bother the dinners!" cried Alfred, with all a schoolboy's improvidence. "I'll eat bread-and-cheese. Good-bye, Alice."

"Did you chance to hear what Sir Philip died of, Alice?" questioned Mrs. Raynor, when the doors had done banging after Alfred.

"No, mamma."

"But you see William Stane sometimes, don't you?"

"Yes, I see Mr. Stane now and then. Not often. He has not said anything about his father in my hearing."

"I wonder at that. So friendly as we once were."

"The first time I saw Mr. Stane after Sir Philip died, I said just a few words to him—that I was sorry to hear he was dead," resumed Alice. "I thought perhaps it was what would be expected of me. He thanked me, and said, Yes, it was a blow to them all, because his father had been latterly so much better, and the death at the last was sudden. He did not say any more."

"Is he friendly in his manner?"

"Quite so, mamma. When I first went to Mrs. Preen's he was very cold and distant; but lately he has been much more friendly."

"Well, child, I can only say how unfortunate it is that you should have to be thrown out of your situation. It may be so difficult to get another."

"Mrs. Preen says she will look out for me," concluded Alice with a rising sob. "She knows that good appointments are scarce."

But not one of them felt the news as Edina felt it. It was she who took the most practical part in all their home troubles and straits, therefore she could best dread additional difficulty. Only the previous day she had gone into the City to the warehouse that had supplied her with the chenille and silk nets, and had an interview with the master. He assured her that the nets had gone almost entirely out of fashion, that they had none to give out, and suggested that she should try her hand at some other employment—say the crape-trimming work. But Edina did not know how the crape work was done, or anything about it, and had come home disheartened.

Another matter, that had been giving her and Mrs. Raynor concern for some little time, was the education of the children. Alfred ought to go now to a better school; Robert ought to be at one. The child was eight years old. Sometimes it had crossed Edina's mind to wish he could be got into Christ's Hospital: she deemed it high time now, with Alice coming home, to think about it practically. If poor little Bob could get admitted there, it would make room for Alice.

Talking it over with Mrs. Raynor and Charles that same evening, it was decided that the first practical step towards it must be to get a list of the governors. It might be that one of that body had known something of Major Raynor in the days gone by, and would help his little son. How was the list to be procured? They knew not, and went to bed pondering the question.

"I will go to the library and ask Mr. Jones," said Edina the next morning. "Perhaps he has one."

Mr. Jones had not a list; but he thought he knew where he could borrow one. And he did so, bringing it himself to the door in the after part of the day. Edina sat down to study it.

"Here is one name nearly at the beginning that we know," she said, looking up with quite a bright smile.

"Is there!" exclaimed Charles, with animation, catching sight of the smile, and taking an imaginative view of Robert, yellow-stockinged and capless. "Whose name is it, Edina? Read it out."

"George Atkinson, Esquire, Eagles' Nest."

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Mrs. Raynor. "The very man to whom we cannot apply."

"The very man to whom we will apply," corrected Edina. "If you will not, Mary, I will."

"Would you ask a favour of *him?*"

"Yes," said Edina emphatically. "Mr. Atkinson has not behaved well to you: let us put it in his power to make some slight reparation."

"Edina, I—I hope I am not uncharitable or unforgiving, but I do not feel that I *can* ask him," breathed poor Mrs. Raynor.

"But I don't want you to ask him, Mary; I will do that," returned

Edina. "Perhaps I shall not *like* doing it more than you would; but the thought of poor little Robert will give me courage."

"Those governors have only a presentation once in three years, I fancy," observed Charles. "The master of Eagles' Nest may have given away his."

"We can but ascertain, Charley. And now—I wonder how we are to get his address? I hope he is in England!"

"He is at Eagles' Nest, Edina."

"At Eagles' Nest!" repeated Edina. "Is he?"

"He took possession of it six months ago, and gave Fairfax, who was in it, a house hard by. And I know he is there still, for only a day or two ago I saw Preen address a letter to him."

"You never told us he was at Eagles' Nest, Charles," said Edina, a shade of reproach in her tone.

"Why should I have told you?" returned Charles. "George Atkinson's movements have nothing to do with us now; nor is his name so pleasant a one to us that it need be gratuitously mentioned."

"Well, I am glad he is at Eagles' Nest, for I shall go to him, instead of writing," concluded Edina. "In these cases a personal application is generally of more use than a written one. And, Mary, you will, at any rate, wish me God speed."

"With my whole heart," replied Mrs. Raynor.

Once more Edina Raynor stood before the gates of Eagles' Nest. As she walked from the station, being unable to afford a fly, the great alteration in the place struck her. Not in Eagles' Nest itself: that looked just the same: but in the demesne pertaining to it. The land was well-cared for and flourishing; the pigsties had been renovated into decent and healthy cottages; the row of dwellings, stopped in their construction and remaining ugly skeletons, had been completed; other rows had been erected, and all were filled with contented inhabitants; and the men and women that Edina saw about as she passed, looked respectable, and happy. None could look on the estate of Eagles' Nest as it was now, and not see how good and wise was its ruler. Her Aunt Ann's supineness and Major Raynor's neglect had been remedied.

"Is Mr. Atkinson at home?" asked Edina, as a servant whom she did not know answered her ring.

"He is at home, ma'am, but I do not think you can see him," was the answer. "Mr. Atkinson is very unwell indeed, and does not see visitors."

"I think he will perhaps see me," said Edina. And she took a leaf from her pocket-book, and wrote her name, adding that she wished to see him very much.

The man showed her to a room. He came back immediately, and ushered her into his master's presence. As she entered, George Atkinson rose from a sofa on which he had been lying near the window, and went forward to meet her.

"Edina!"

The old familiar name from the once loved lips—nay, perhaps loved still: who knew?—in the old familiar voice, brought the tremor to her heart and the tear to her eye. Mr. Atkinson handed her to a chair and sat down in another. The window stood open to the delicious summer air, to the sweet morning sunshine · for Edina had come early, and it was not yet much past eleven—to the charming landscape that lay stretched around in the distance. But the impulse of feeling that had prompted the warm greeting seemed to die away again, and he addressed her more coldly and calmly.

"Your coming here this morning, Miss Raynor, seems to me to be a very singular coincidence. You see that letter on the table, just written for the post: have the kindness to read the superscription."

Edina did so. It bore her own name: and was addressed to the "Care of Charles Raynor, Messrs. Prestleigh and Preen's."

"I did not know your own address. That it was somewhere in or near London, I did know, but not the precise locality. The letter contains only a request that you would kindly come down to me here."

"I!" exclaimed Edina.

"Yes. I wanted to see you. But I will ring for my housekeeper to show you to a room where you can take your bonnet off."

"I am not come to remain," replied Edina. "Half an hour—less—will be enough to transact my business with you."

"But half an hour will not transact mine with you. Stay the day with me," he pleadingly added, "and enliven a poor invalid." And Edina made no further objection.

When she returned to the room, looking so cool and fresh in her summer muslin, old though it might be, with her brown hair braided from her pleasant face, and the brown eyes sweet and earnest as of yore, George Atkinson thought how little, how very little she was altered. It is these placid faces that do not change. Neither had he changed very much. He looked ill, and wore a beard now; a silky, long brown beard; but his face and eyes and voice were the same. And somehow, now that she was in his presence, and heard that musical voice, and met the steadfast, kindly look in the blue eyes, she nearly forgot her resentment against him for his conduct to the Raynors.

"You are a governor of Christ's Hospital, I believe," she began, entering upon her business at once as she resumed her seat.

"I am."

"I came here to ask for your next presentation to it. Is it promised?"

"Not yet. It falls due next year."

"Then will you promise it to me?" continued Edina. "It is for the youngest child of Mrs. Raynor. Will you give it to him?"

"No."

"No!" she repeated, tone and spirit alike falling with the disappointment. "But why not?"

"I have a boy in my eye who is in want of it badly: worse than Mrs. Raynor's son will be."

"It is nearly impossible that any boy can want it much worse than poor Robert does."

"In that matter our opinions differ, Miss Raynor."

"And it would be making some trifling reparation to the family."

"Reparation for what?"

"For—what you did," answered Edina, hesitating for a moment and then speaking up bravely. "For turning them out of Eagles' Nest."

"What would you have done in my place?" questioned Mr. Atkinson good-humouredly. "Have left them in quiet possession of Eagles' Nest?"

"I—don't—know—whether I should, or not," hesitated Edina, for the question puzzled her. "Of course Eagles' Nest was legally yours, and I cannot say you were wrong to take it. But I think you might in some way have mitigated the blow. *I* could not have turned a family from their home and not inquired how they were to live."

"I am aware you could not: for, unless I am mistaken, it was you who provided them with another. The Raynors wanted a lesson read to them, and it was well they should have it. What did I find when I came home; what did I hear? Was there a single good act done by any one of them while they were at Eagles' Nest? How did they use the fine property they came into: well?—or disgracefully? Yes, I repeat it, disgracefully. Things were going to rack and ruin. The poor tenants were ground down to the dust, the uttermost farthing of rent was exacted from them, while they were uncared for; body and soul alike abandoned, to get through life as they could, or to perish. And all for what?—to swell the pride and the folly and the prodigality of the puffed-up Raynors. Could you approve of all this, Edina, or find excuse for it?"

She shook her head in the negative. He seemed to have called her Edina again unconsciously.

"It was self with them all; nothing but self, from Major Raynor downwards," he continued. "Show, extravagance, horses, dresses, vanity! Not a sound moral, or prudent, or worthy aim was inculcated on the children, not a penny piece given away in charity. Charles Raynor, the supposed heir, was an apt pupil. Why! he had writs out against him, though he was under age."

Edina could not gainsay a word. It was all too true.

"You had this reported to you on your return, I presume, Mr. Atkinson?"

"I had. But I did not take the report uncorroborated. I came down here, and saw for myself. I was here for many weeks, watching."

Edina felt surprised. "How could that have been? The Raynors did not see you?"

"I came down incog. Nobody knew me in the place, and I stayed on in my lodgings at Jetty the carpenter's and looked about me. The natives took me for an inquisitive man who was fond of poking himself into matters that did not concern him; a second Paul Pry. Mr. Charles Raynor, I heard, christened me the Tiger," added the speaker, with a smile.

Edina held her breath. What a wonderful revelation it was!

"I was in Australia when I heard that Mrs. Atkinson had left Eagles' Nest to me," he resumed. "The news reached me in a letter from herself, written only a day or two before her death; written chiefly to tell me where her will would be found—in the hands of my solicitors, Callard and Prestleigh. When that letter arrived at Sydney, I was travelling in the more remote and unfrequented parts of the country, and I did not get it for some six months afterwards, on my return to Sydney. Rather a large accumulation of letters was waiting for me at Sydney, as you may suppose; and I found, by those from my partner, Street, and his brother the lawyer, that the former will was alone known to exist, and that Major Raynor had entered into possession of Eagles' Nest. Now what did I at once resolve to do? Why, to leave him always in possession of it; never to speak of this later will, but just to put it in the fire when I got to England, and say nothing about it. The Major had a right to Eagles' Nest; I had not any right at all to it: and the resolve did not cost me a moment's thought ——"

"It is just as I should have expected you to act," put in Edina, her cheeks flushing.

"Don't give me more credit than I deserve, Miss Raynor. I cannot tell what I might have done had I been a poor man. Kept the estate, perhaps. But I was a rich one, and I did not want it. I sailed for England; and, on landing went direct to London, and to Street the banker's, arriving there at night. He chanced to be at home alone; his wife and children were at Brighton, and we had a few hours' quiet chat. The first thing I heard of was the miserable state of affairs down here. Eagles' Nest was going to ruin, Street said, and the Major and his son were probably going to ruin with it. 'I will go down incog. and see for myself,' I said to Street, 'and you need not tell anybody of my return yet awhile.' I did go down, as I have told you; and Street kept counsel, and when he wrote to me addressed his letters to 'Mr. George.' What I saw shocked me. I could not detect one redeeming

point in the conduct of Major Raynor and his family. To leave the estate in their hands would be little less than a sin, as I looked upon it, and a cruel wrong upon the poor people who lived on it. So I deliberated on my measures, and finally took them. Edwin Street announced my speedy return, and conveyed a letter from me (apparently written in Australia) to Callard and Prestleigh, informing them that they held the will, and ordering them to produce it, that it might be proved and acted upon. I was more than justified in what I did, as I deemed then," emphatically concluded Mr. Atkinson, "and as I deem now."

"Well—yes, I cannot say you were not," acquiesced Edina. "But it seemed to us so bitterly hard—never to inquire what became of the Raynors; never to offer them any help."

"Stay," said he. "I did inquire. I heard that Miss Edina Raynor had come forward from Trennach with her help and had established Mrs. Raynor in a school in which she was likely to do well. I heard that Charles Raynor was about to be taken by the hand by an old friend of his father's, one Colonel Cockburn, who meant to put him forward in the world. In short, I left England again in the belief that the Raynors were, in a smaller way, as prosperous as they had been at Eagles' Nest."

"What misapprehensions exist!" exclaimed Edina. "That home was soon lost again through a fire, and Colonel Cockburn only saw Charles to tell him he could not help him. Their life for the last three years has been one long, perpetual course of humiliation, poverty, struggle, and privation."

"Ay; and you have voluntarily shared it with them," he answered, looking straight into her eyes. "Well, they needed the lesson. But I would have been a friend to Charles Raynor had he let me be and not shown himself so haughtily upstart; and to his cousin the doctor also. When Charles was in a mess at Eagles' Nest, in danger of being arrested for debt, I asked him to confide his trouble to me and let me help him. Not a bit of it. He flung my words back in my face with as much scorn as if I had been a dog. So I let him go his own way: though I privately settled the debt for him. Had he known who I was, and that I had the power to eject him and his family from their heritage, I could have understood his behaviour: but that was impossible, and I think I never met with so bad an example of conduct shown to a stranger. Yes; Charles Raynor needed a lesson read to him, and he has had it."

"Indeed he has. They all have. Charles Raynor is as true, and good, and earnest a young man now as he was once thoughtless and self-arrogant. There will be no fear of his lapsing back in this life."

"I saw him a year ago in Preen's office," remarked Mr. Atkinson, "and liked his tone. Preen gives me the best accounts of him and of his sister."

"They deserve it," said Edina. "But oh, you do not know what a

struggle it is for us all," she added, her imploring voice almost broken by emotion, "or what a boon it would be to get the little one into the Bluecoat School. If you did, I think you would grant it me."

"No, I should not," persisted he, smiling half saucily in Edina's face. "The presentation falls due next year; and by that time little Raynor will not want it. He may be back here at Eagles' Nest."

Edina gazed at him. "What do you mean?" she gasped.

"I have not had particularly strong health—as you know; but a couple of months ago I was so ill as to fear the worst. It caused me to wish to revise my will, and to consider certain of its provisions. I think I shall leave Eagles' Nest to you."

"I won't have it," cried Edina, bursting into tears of excitement. "I will not. How can you be so unjust, Mr. Atkinson? What right have I to Eagles' Nest?"

"Right! You have shared your home with the Raynors when it was a poor one—for the home is virtually yours, I am told: you can do the like, you know, when you become rich."

"I will not have Eagles' Nest," she sobbed. "It is of no use to think of such a thing, for I will not. I have told you the Raynors are worthy of it themselves."

He almost laughed at her alarm; at the frightened sincerity with which she spoke.

"Well, well, the bequest is not made," he said in a changed tone; and an idea flashed over Edina that he had only been trying her. "Very thankful I am to say that health and strength appear to be returning to me; the doctors think I have taken a turn, and shall soon be completely strong, better than I have been for years. So, as my death seems to have put itself off, I have thought of making over Eagles' Nest to Charles Raynor by a deed of gift. That request for your presence here," glancing at the letter on the table, "was to consult with you, as to whether he was so changed in heart and conduct that it might safely be done."

"Oh, yes, yes, indeed he is," responded Edina, drying her happy tears. "I told you so before I knew of this, and I told you truth."

"I fully believe you. But I must have an interview with him. Let him come down here on Saturday and remain with me until Monday morning. If I find that he may be fully trusted for the future, in a short while he and his mother will be back at Eagles' Nest. London, will be hereafter my chief home. They shall come and see me there when they please: and I shall doubtless be welcome to come here occasionally."

"And you do not intend to go wandering again?"

"Never again. I have had enough of it. It may be, that I should have enjoyed better health had I been contented to take more rest. I have purchased the lease of a house in London, to which I shall remove

on quitting Eagles' Nest. I am also looking out for some snug little house and property in this neighbourhood—which I have learned to like—and, when I can find it, shall purchase that."

A servant came in to lay the cloth for dinner: since his illness Mr. Atkinson had taken that meal at one o'clock. A tempting dish of lamb cutlets and peas, and a roast duckling. On the sideboard stood some little tartlets and custard. The tears rose to Edina's eyes as she sat down to table, and a choking sensation to her throat. It was not so much that she was about to partake of such a dinner once again, as a thought of the half-famished plates at home.

"What is it, Edina?"

"I was only wishing I could transport some of this to London," she answered, glancing at him through her wet eyelashes with a smile.

They sat at the open window again after dinner, talking of the past and the future, and Edina stayed to make tea for him—which came in early. As she put her hand into his on saying farewell, he left a small case of money in it.

"Shall you be too proud to accept it for them?"

"I have not any pride," answered Edina with a grateful smile. "If I ever had any, the experience of the past three years has taken it out of me."

"I never intended to keep Eagles' Nest," he whispered. "I think you might have divined that, Edina. You knew me well once."

"And suppose Charles Raynor had continued to be unworthy?"

"Then Eagles' Nest would have passed away from him for ever. Its inheritor would have been Edina."

The evening was getting on at Mrs. Raynor's. Charles, who had been detained late at the office, was sitting down to a plate of stewed haricot beans, which had been kept warm over the fire, and little Robert was in bed. They had been saying how late Edina was. Mrs. Raynor had a very bad headache.

"Let me place that cushion more comfortably for you, dear mamma," said Charles.

"It will do very well as it is, my dear," she answered. "Get your supper: you must want it. *How* you must want it."

"Oh, not very much," said Charles, making a pretence of eating the beans slowly, not to show his hunger. "Alfred, do be quiet!—don't you know mamma is ill? Kate, sit down."

"There's Edina!" burst forth Alfred, clattering out to meet her in the passage.

She came in, looking pleased and gay, with sundry parcels in her hand. Kate and Alfred jumped round her.

"How have you sped, Edina?" asked Mrs. Raynor. "Has George Atkinson given Robert the presentation?"

"No; he will not give it him."

"I feared so. He must be altogether a hard-hearted man. May Heaven have mercy upon us!"

"It will, it will," said Edina. "I have always told you so."

She was undoing the papers. The young eyes regarding them were opened to their utmost width. Had a fairy been out with Edina? Buns, chocolate, a jar of marmalade, a beautiful pat of butter, and—what could be in that other big parcel?

"Open it, Charley," said Edina.

He had left his beans to look on with the others, and did as he was told. Out tumbled a whole cargo of mutton chops. Ah, that was the best sight, dear as cakes and sweets are to the young! Mrs. Raynor put her hands together softly; she could see nothing clearly for her glistening tears.

"I thought you could all eat a mutton chop for supper, Mary. I know you had but a poor dinner."

"Are we *all* to have one?" demanded Alfred, believing Aladdin's lamp must really have been at work.

"Yes, all. Charley and mamma can have two if they like. Don't go on with your beans yet, Charles."

"Robert," called out Kate, flying to the door, "Edina's come home, and she has brought us such a many things, and a mutton chop apiece."

Why, there he was, the audacious little Bob, peeping in in his white nightgown!

"A *whole* mutton chop!" cried he, amazed at the magnitude of the question.

"Yes, a whole one, dear," said Edina, turning to him. "And not only for to-night. Every day you shall have a whole mutton chop, or something as good."

"And puddings too?" stammered Kate, the idea of the fairy becoming a certainty.

"And puddings too," said Edina. "Ah, children, dear children, I bring you such news! Did I not always tell you that God would remember us in His own good time? Mary, are you listening? In a very short while you will all be back at Eagles' Nest."

Charles's heart beat wildly. He looked at Edina to see if she were joking, his eyes fearfully earnest.

"I am telling you the truth, dear ones. Eagles' Nest is to be yours again, and our struggles and privations are alike over. George Atkinson never has meant to keep it from you. You are to go down to him on Saturday, Charley, and stay over Sunday."

"I'll not abuse him again," said Charley, letting a smile stifle a rising sob. "But—my best coat is so shabby, you know, Edina. I am ashamed of it at church."

"Perhaps you may get another between now and then," nodded Edina.

"What's *this?*" cried Kate, touching the last of the parcels.

"A bottle of wine for your mamma. She will look so fat and rosy soon that we shan't know her, for we shall have nothing to do but nurse her up."

"My goodness!" cried Kate. "Wine! Mamma, here's a bottle of wine for you!"

But there was no answer. Poor Mrs. Raynor lay back in her chair unable to make any, the silent tears stealing down her pale cheeks.

Charles bent over and kissed her. Little Bob, in his nightgown, crouched down by her side at the fire; while Edina, throwing off her shawl and bonnet, began to make preparations for the supper.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HARD LINES.

Lying in her darkened chamber, sick almost unto death, was Mrs. Frank Raynor. A baby, some few days old, slept in a cot by the wall. No other child had been born to her, until now, since that season of peril at Eagles' Nest: and just as her life had nearly paid the forfeit then, so it had again now. She was in danger still; she, herself, thought dying.

An attentive nurse moved noiselessly about the room. Edina stood by the bed, fanning the poor pale face resting on it. The window was open as far as it would go, behind the blind: the invalid's persistent cry throughout the morning had been, "Give me air!"

A light, quick step on the stairs, and Frank entered. He took the fan from Edina's tired hand into his strong one; and she seized on the opportunity to go down to the kitchen, to help Eve with the jelly ordered by Dr. Tymms; a skilful practitioner of repute, who had been in constant attendance. Daisy opened her eyes to look at her husband, and the nurse quitted the room, leaving them together.

"You will soon get about again, my darling," said Frank, in his low, earnest, and most hopeful tones, that were worth their weight in gold to a sick chamber. "Tymms assures me you are better this morning."

"I don't want to get about," faintly responded Daisy.

"Not want to get about!" cried Frank, uncertain whether it would be best to treat the remark lightly, as a passing fancy emanating from weakness, or to inquire farther into it—for everything said by his wife now bore this depressing tenor.

"And you ought to know that I cannot wish it," she resumed.

"But I do not know it, Daisy, my love. I know not why you should speak so."

"I shall be glad to die."

Frank bent a little lower, forgetting the fan. "Daisy, I truly and honestly believe that you will recover; that the turning-point has come and gone. Tymms thinks so. Why, yesterday you could not have talked as you are talking now."

"I know I am dying. And it is so much the better for me."

He put his hand under the pillow, raising it slightly to bring her face nearer his, and spoke very tenderly and persuasively. That his own opinion as to her improving state was justified, he fully believed.

"My darling, you are getting better; and will get better. But, were it as you think, Daisy—otherwise—all the more reason would exist for telling me what you mean, and why you have for so long a time been in this depressed state of mind. Let me know the cause, Daisy."

For a few minutes she did not answer, and there ensued a pause. Frank thought that she was deliberating whether or not she should answer—and he was not mistaken. She shut her eyes again, and he took up the fan.

"I have thought, while lying here, that I should like to tell you before I die," spoke Daisy at last. "But you don't need telling."

"I do. I do, indeed."

"It is because you no longer love me. You care for somebody else: not for me."

In very astonishment, Frank let fall the fan on the counterpane. "And who is—'somebody else'?"

"Oh, you know."

"Daisy, this is a serious charge, and you must answer me. I do *not* know."

She turned her face towards him, but so buried it on the pillow that hardly any of it was visible, not speaking. Frank waited: he was ransacking his brains.

"*Surely* you cannot mean Edina!"

A petulant, reproachful movement betrayed her anger. Edina! Who was an angel on earth, and so good to them all!—and older, besides. The tears began to drop slowly from her closed lashes, for she thought he must be playing with her.

"You will be sorry for it when I am gone, Frank. *Edina!*"

"Who is it, Daisy?"

A flush of hectic stole into her white cheeks, and the name was whispered so faintly that Frank had much ado to catch it.

"Rosaline Bell!" he repeated, gazing at her in doubt and surprise, for the thought crossed him that her senses might be wandering. "But, Daisy, suppose we speak of this to-morrow instead of now," he added as a measure of precaution. "You ——"

"We will speak of it now, or never," she interrupted vehemently. At least, as vehemently as anyone can speak whose voice is faint at the best and whose strength is of the lowest. And the sudden anger Frank's words gave her—for she deemed that he was acting altogether a deceitful part and dared not speak—nerved her to tell out her grievances more fully than she might otherwise have had courage to do. Frank listened to the accusation with apparent equanimity; to the long line of disloyal conduct he had been indulging in since the early days at Trennach down to the present hour. His simple attempt at refutation made no impression whatever: the belief was too long and firmly rooted to be quickly dispelled.

"I would have borne any trial better than this," concluded she, with a succession of sobbing sighs: "all our misfortunes would have been but sport to me in comparison. Don't say any more, please. Perhaps she will feel some remorse when she hears I'm dead."

"We will let it drop now then, Daisy," assented Frank. "But I have had no more thought of Rosaline than of the man in the moon."

"Will you go away now, please, and send the nurse in?"

"What on earth is to be done?" thought Frank, doing as he was ordered. "With this wretched fancy hanging over her, she may never get well; never. Torment of mind in these critical cases sometimes means death."

"How is she now?" asked Edina, meeting him on the stairs.

"Just the same."

"She seems so very unhappy in mind, Frank," whispered Edina. "Do you know anything about it?"

"She is low and weak at present, you see," answered Frank evasively. And he passed on.

Frank Raynor was taking a mental review of the past. Of the admiration he *had* given to Rosaline Bell at Trennach; of the solicitude he had evinced for her (or, rather, for her mother) since their stay in London. Of his constant visits to them: visits paid every three or four days at first; later, daily or twice a day—for poor Mrs. Bell was now nearer her end than was Daisy. Yes, he did see, looking at the past carefully and dispassionately, that Daisy (her suspicions having been, as she had now confessed, first aroused by the tattle of the waiting-maid, Tabitha) might have fancied she saw grounds to feed her jealousy. She could not know, lacking the clue, that his friendship and solicitude for the Bells proceeded from a widely different cause. That clue she would never, as he believed, have furnished to her so long as she should live.

"What a blessing it would be if some people were born without tongues!" concluded Frank, thinking of Tabitha Float.

The slight symptoms of improvement continued; and at sunset Frank Raynor knew that his wife's condition would bear the carrying

out of an idea he had formed. It was yet daylight outside, though the drawn curtains made the room dark, when Daisy was conscious of a sad, beautiful face bending over her, and an entreating voice whose gentle tone told of sadness.

"Don't shrink from me, Mrs. Frank Raynor," whispered Rosaline—for she it was. "I am come to strive to put straight what I hear has been crooked."

And the few words she spoke; spoke earnestly and solemnly; brought peace to the unhappy wife's heart. Daisy was too ill to feel much self-reproach then, but it was with some shame she found how mistaken she had been.

"Oh, believe me!" concluded Rosaline, "I have never had a wrong thought of Mr. Frank Raynor; nor has he had one of me. Had we been true brother and sister, our intercourse with each other could not have been more open and simple."

"He—he liked you at Trennach, and you liked him," murmured poor Daisy, three parts convinced, but tearful. "People talked about it."

"He liked me as an acquaintance, nothing more," sighed Rosaline, passing over all mention of her own early feelings. "He was fond of talking and laughing with me, and I would talk and laugh back again. I was light-hearted then. But never, I solemnly declare it, did a word of love, no, nor of affection, pass between us. And, in the midst of it, there fell upon me and my mother the dreadful grief of my father's unhappy death. I have never laughed since then."

"I have been thinking all these past three years that he went to the house only to see you," sobbed Daisy.

Rosaline shook her head. "He has come entirely for my mother. Without pay, for he will not take it, he has been unremittingly kind and attentive, and has assuaged her pains on the way to death. God bless him! A few days, and I shall never see him again in this world. But I shall not forget what he has done for us; and God will not forget it."

"*You* are not going to die, are you?" cried poor puzzled Daisy.

"I am going to emigrate to New Zealand," replied Rosaline. "As soon as I shall have laid my dear mother in her last home—and Death's shadow is even now upon her—I bid farewell to England for ever. We have relations who are settled near Wellington, and they are waiting to receive me. Were Mr. Raynor a free man, and had never possessed any other ties, there could be no question, now or ever, of love between him and me."

Daisy's delicate hand went out to clasp the not less delicate one that rested near her on the bed, and her cheeks took quite a red tinge for her own folly and mistakes in the past. A wonderful liking, fancy, admiration, esteem—she hardly knew what to call it—was springing up

in her heart for this sad and beautiful young woman, whom she had so miserably misjudged.

"Forgive me for my foolish thoughts," she whispered, quite a painful entreaty in her eyes. "I wish I had known you before: I would have made a friend of you."

"Thank you, thank you!" warmly responded Rosaline. "That is all I came to say; but it is Heaven's truth. I, the unconscious cause of the trouble, am more sorry than you can be. Farewell, Mrs. Raynor, for now I must go back to my mother. I shall ever pray for your happiness and your husband's."

"Won't you kiss me?" asked Daisy with a rising sob. And Rosaline bent to do it.

"Are you convinced now, Daisy?" questioned Frank, coming into the room when he had seen Rosaline out of the house. "Are you happier?"

All the answer she made was to lie on his arm and cry silently, abjectly murmuring something that he could not hear.

"I thought it best to get Rosaline to come, as you would not believe me. When I told her of the mischief that was supposed to have been afloat, she was more eager to come than I to send her."

"Please forgive me, Frank! Please don't be harsh with me! I am so ashamed of myself; so sorry!"

"It is over now; don't think about it any more," said he, kissing her very fervently.

"I will never be so stupid again," she sobbed. "And—Frank—I think I shall—perhaps—get well now."

Rosaline had said that Death's shadow lay upon her mother even while she was talking with Mrs. Frank Raynor. In just twenty-four hours after that, Death himself came. When the day's sunlight was fading, to give place to the tranquil stars and to the cooler air of night, Mrs. Bell passed peacefully away to her heavenly home. She had been a sad sufferer: she and her sufferings were alike at rest now.

It was some two hours later. The women had gone downstairs, and Rosaline was sitting alone, her eyes dry but her heart overwhelmed with its anguish, when Blase Pellet came to make a call of inquiry. He had evinced true anxiety for the poor sick woman, and had often brought her little costly dainties, such as rare, choice fruit. And once—it was a positive fact—once when Rosaline was absent, Blase had sat down and read to her from the New Testament.

"Will you see her, Blase?" asked Rosaline, as he stood still, half dumb with the news. "She looks so peaceful."

Blase assented; and they went together into the death chamber. Very peaceful. Yes, none could look more so.

"Poor old lady!" spoke Blase. "I'm sure I feel very sorry: almost as though it was my own mother. Was she sensible to the last?"

"Quite to the very last; and collected," replied Rosaline, suppressing a sob in her throat. "Mr. Frank Raynor called in the afternoon; and I know he saw that nothing more could be done for her, though he did not say as much. She was very still after he left, lying with her eyes shut. When she opened them and saw me, she put up her hand for me to take it. 'I have been thinking about your father and that past trouble, dear,' she said. 'I am going to him: and what has never been cleared up here will be clear there.' They were nearly the last words she spoke."

"It's almost a pity but what it had been cleared up for her here," said Blase. "It might have set her uncertainty at rest, don't you see. Sometimes I had three parts of a mind to tell it her. She'd have thought a little less of Mr. Frank Raynor if I had told."

Rosaline, standing on one side the bed, cast a steady look on the young man, standing on the other. "Blase," she said, "I think the time has come for me to ask you what you mean. As you well know, it is not your first hint, by many a one, in regard to what you saw that fatal night at Trennach. I have wanted to set you right; but I was obliged to avoid the subject while my mother lived; for had the real truth reached her she might have died of it."

"Died of it!—Set me right!" repeated Blase, gazing back at Rosaline.

"By the half words, which you have allowed to escape you from time to time, I gather that you have believed my unfortunate father owed his death to Mr. Frank Raynor."

"So he did," said Blase.

"So he did *not*, Blase. It was I who killed my father."

The assertion seemed to confound him. But for the emotion that Rosaline was struggling with, her impressive tones, and the dead woman lying there, across whom they spoke, Blase might have deemed she was essaying to deceive him, and accorded her no belief.

"Are you doubting my words, Blase?" she asked. "Listen. In going home from Granny Sandon's that night, I took the street way, and saw you standing outside the shop, preparing to shut it up. You nodded to me across the street, and I thought you meant to follow me as soon as you were at liberty. When I was beyond your sight, I set off to run, and should have been at home before you could have caught me up, but for meeting clerk Trim's wife. She kept me talking for I cannot tell how long, relating some grievous tale about an accident that had happened to her sister at Pendon. I did not like to leave her in the middle of it; but I got away as soon as I could, though I daresay a quarter of an hour had been lost. As I reached the middle of the Plain, I turned round and saw some one following me at a good distance off, and I made no doubt it was you. At that same moment, Mr.

Frank Raynor met me, and began telling me of a fight that had taken place between Molly Janes and her husband, and of the woman's injuries, which he had been then attending to. It did not occupy above a minute; but, during that minute, while I was standing, you were advancing. I feared you would catch me up; and I wished Mr. Frank a hurried good night, and ran across to hide behind the mounds while you passed by. He did not understand the motive of my sudden movement and followed me to ask what was the matter. I told him: that I had seen you coming, and I did not want you to join me. When I thought you must have gone by, I stole out to look; and, as I could not see you, thought what good speed you had made, to be already out of sight. It never occurred to me to suppose you had come to the mounds, instead of passing on."

"But I had come to them," interrupted Blase eagerly. "My eyes are keener than most people's, and I knew you both; and I saw you dart across, and Raynor after you. So I followed."

"Well—in very heedlessness, in playfulness, I ran up to the mouth of the shaft, and pretended to be listening for Dan Sandon's ghost. Mr. Raynor seized hold of me; for I was too near the edge, and the least false step might have been fatal. Not a moment had we stood there; not a moment; when a shout, followed by a blow on Mr. Raynor's shoulder, startled us. It was my poor father. He was raising his stick for another blow when I, in my terror, pushed between him and Mr. Raynor to part them. With all my strength—and a terrified woman possesses strength—I flung them apart, not knowing the mouth of the pit was so near. *I flung my father into it, Blase.*"

"Good mercy!" ejaculated Blase.

"Mr. Frank Raynor leaped forward to save him, and nearly lost his own life in consequence: it was an even touch, whether he followed my father, or whether he could balance himself backwards. I seized his coat, and I believe—he believes—that that alone saved him."

"I saw the scuffle," gasped Blase. "I could have taken my oath that it was Raynor who pushed your father in."

"I am telling the truth in the presence of my dead mother and before Heaven," spoke Rosaline, lifting her hands in solemnity. "Do you doubt it, Blase Pellet?"

"No—no; I can't, I don't," confessed Blase. "Moonlight's deceptive. And the wind was rushing along, like mad, between my eyes and the shaft."

"I only meant to part them," wailed Rosaline. "And, but that my poor father was unsteady in his gait that night, he need not have fallen. It is true I pushed him close to the brink, and there he tottered, in his unsteadiness, for the space of a second, and fell backwards: his poor lameness made him awkward at the best of times. A stronger man, sure of his feet, need not and would not have fallen in. But oh, Blase,

that's no excuse for me! It does not lessen my guilt or my misery one iota. It was I who killed him; I, I!"

"Has Mr. Raynor known this all along?" asked Blase, whose faculties for the moment were somewhat confused.

Rosaline looked at him in surprise. "*Known it?* Why, he was an actor in it. Ah, Blase, you have been holding Mr. Raynor guilty in your suspicious heart; he knows you have; and he has been keeping the secret out of compassion for me, bearing your ill thoughts in silent patience. All these four years he has been dreading that you would bring the accusation against him publicly. It has been in your heart; I know it has; to accuse him of my father's murder."

"No, not really," said Blase, knitting his brows. "I should never have done it. I only wanted him to think so."

"And, see you not what it would have involved? I honestly believe that Frank Raynor would never have cleared himself at my expense, but he feared that *I* should speak and clear him. As I should have done. And that would have gone well-nigh to kill my poor mother. For my sake Mr. Raynor has borne all this, borne with you, doing what lay in his power to ward off exposure."

"He always favoured you," spoke Blase in a crestfallen tone.

"Not for the sake of *that* has he done it," quickly returned Rosaline. "He takes his share of blame for that night's work; and *will* take it, in spite of blame not attaching to him. Had he gone straight home as I bade him, and not followed me to the mounds, it would not have happened, he says; so he reproaches himself. And that, so far, is true. It was a dreadful thing for both of us, Blase."

"I wish it had been him instead of you," retorted Blase.

"You know that our old clergyman at Trennach, Mr. Pine, was in London last Easter and came here to see my mother," resumed Rosaline. "I privately asked him to let me have half an hour alone with him, and he said I might call on him at his lodgings. I went; and I told him what I have now told you, Blase; and at my request he got a lawyer there, who drew up this statement of mine in due form, and I swore to its truth and signed it in their presence. A copy of this, sealed and attested, has been handed to Mr. Raynor; Mr. Pine keeps another copy. I do not suppose they will ever need to be used; but there the deeds are, in case of need. It was right that some guarantee of the truth should be given to secure Mr. Raynor, as I was intending to go to the other end of the world."

"It sounds altogether like a tale," cried Blase.

"A very hideous one."

"And, as to your going to the end of the world, Rosaline, you know that you need not do it. I am well off, now my father's dead, and——"

She held up her hand warningly. "Blase, *you* know that this is an interdicted subject. I shall never, never marry in this world: and, of

all men in it, the two whom I would least marry are you and Mr. Raynor. He takes a share of that night's blame; you may take at least an equal share: for, had you not persisted in following me from Trennach, when you knew it would be distasteful to me, I should have had no need to seek refuge in the mounds, and the calamity could not have occurred. Never speak to me of marriage again, Blase."

"It's very hard lines," grumbled Blase.

"And are not my lines hard?—and have not Mr. Frank Raynor's been hard? But oh, Blase, dear Blase," she softly added, "let us remember, to our consolation, that these 'hard lines' are but sent to us in mercy. Without them, and the discipline they bring, we might never seek to gain Heaven."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUNSHINE EVERYWHERE.

Alice Raynor was sitting in a small parlour at Mrs. Preen's, dedicated to herself and the children's studies, busily employed in correcting exercises. The afternoon sun shone upon the room hotly, and she had drawn the table into the shade. Her head and fingers were given to their work, but her deeper thoughts were far away: for there existed not a minute in the day that the anxiety caused by her uncertain prospects was not present to her mind, more or less. She knew nothing of the new hopes relative to Eagles' Nest. In good truth, those hopes, both to Mrs. Raynor and Edina, seemed almost too wonderful to be true; and as yet they refrained from imparting them to Alice.

The corrections did not take long to make, and then Alice laid down the pen and sat thinking. She felt hot and thirsty and weary, and wished it was nearer tea-time. The old days at Eagles' Nest came into her thoughts. They very often did come: and the contrast they presented to these later ones always made her sad.

A slight tap at the door—which she did not hear in the noise of the street—and a gentleman entered. William Stane. Alice blushed through her hot cheeks when she saw who it was, and brushed the tears from her eyes. But not before he had seen them.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Raynor. Mrs. Preen is out, I hear."

"Yes: she is out with the two little girls."

"I am sorry. I have brought up some admission tickets for the flower-show at the Botanical: they were only given me this morning. Do you think Mrs. Preen will be back soon?"

"Not in time to use the tickets. They are gone to an afternoon tea at Richmond."

"What a pity! A great pity to lose the tickets. It is the rose show.

I—suppose you could not go with me?" added Mr. Stane in some hesitation.

"Oh dear no," replied Alice, glancing at him in astonishment. "Thank you very much."

"Mrs. Preen would not like it, you think?"

"I am sure she would not. You forget that I am only the governess."

Down sat Mr. Stane on the other side the table, and began fingering absently one of the exercise books, looking occasionally at Alice while he did so.

"What were you crying about?" he suddenly asked.

Alice was taken aback. "I—I don't thing I was quite crying."

"You were very near it. What was the matter?"

"I am very sorry to have to leave," she truthfully answered. "Mrs. Preen is about to reside for a time in Devonshire, as perhaps you know, and the little girls are to go to school. So I am no longer wanted here."

"I should consider that a subject for laughing, instead of crying. You will be spared work."

"Ah, you don't know," cried Alice, her tone one of pain. "If I do not work here, I must elsewhere. And the next place I get may be harder than this."

"And you were crying at the anticipation?"

"No. I was crying—that is, I was ready to cry—at the thought of perhaps not being able speedily to find another situation. I—suppose," she timidly added, "you do not happen to know of any situation vacant, Mr. Stane?"

"Why yes, I believe I do. And I think you will be just the right person to fill it."

Her blue eyes brightened, her whole face lighted up with eagerness. "Oh, if you can but obtain it for me! I shall be so thankful, for mamma's sake."

"But it is not as a governess."

"Not as a governess! What then?"

"As a housekeeper."

"Oh, dear!" cried Alice in dismay. "I don't know very much about housekeeping. People would not think me old enough."

"And as a wife."

She did not understand him. He was rising from his seat to approach her, a smile on his face. Alice sat looking at him with parted lips.

"As *my* wife, Alice," he said, bending low. "Oh, my dear, surely our foolish estrangement may end! I have been wishing it for some time past. I am tired of chambers, and want to set up a real home for myself. I want a wife in it. Alice, if you will be that wife, well: otherwise I shall probably stay as I am for ever."

Ah, there could be no longer any doubt: he was in earnest. His tender tones, his beseeching eyes, the warm clasp of his hands, told her all the joyous truth—that his love was her own still. She burst into tears of emotion, and William Stane kissed them away.

"You don't despise me because I have been a governess?" she sobbed.

"My darling, I only love you all the better for it. And shall prize you more."

He sat down by her side and quietly told her all. That for a considerable period of time, after their parting, he had steeled his heart against her, and done his best to drive her out of it. He thought he had succeeded. He believed he should have succeeded but for meeting her again at Mrs. Preen's. That showed him that she was just as dear to him as ever. Still he strove against his love; but he continued his visits to the Preens, who were old friends of his: and each time, that he chanced to see Alice, served to convince him more and more that he could not part with her. He was about to tell his father that he had made up his mind to marry Miss Raynor, when Sir Philip died, and then he did not speak to Alice quite immediately. All this he explained to her.

"And but for your coming into this house, Alice, and my opportunities of seeing you in it, we should in all human probability have remained estranged throughout life. So, you see that I would not have had you not become a governess for the world."

She smiled through her tears. "It was not in that light I spoke."

"I am aware of it. But you are more fitted to make a good wife now, after your experiences and your trials, than you would have been in the old prosperous days at Eagles' Nest. I shall be especially glad for one thing—that when you are mine I shall have a right to ease your mother's straits and difficulties. She has deemed me very hard-hearted I daresay; but I have often and often thought of her, and wished I had a plea for calling on and helping her."

His intention showed a good heart. But William Stane and Alice were alike ignorant of one great fact—that Mrs. Raynor no longer needed help. She would shortly be back at Eagles' Nest, all her struggles over.

The hot sun still streamed into the little room, but Alice wondered what had become of its oppressive heat, what of her own sick weariness. The day and all things with it, without and within, had changed to Elysium.

Frank Raynor attended the funeral of old Mrs. Bell. He chose to do it: and Rosaline felt the respect keenly, and thanked him for it. He would have been just as well pleased not to have Mr. Blase Pellet for his companion mourner: but it had to be. On his return home

from the cemetery, Frank's way led him past the Bells' lodgings, and he called in just to see Rosaline, who had been too sick in health, too depressed in spirits to attend herself. Not one minute had he been there when Mr. Blase Pellet also came in. On the third day from that, Rosaline was to sail for New Zealand.

"And I say that it is a very cruel thing of her to sail at all," struck in Blase, when Frank chanced to make some remark about the voyage. "As my wife, she would——"

"Blase, you know the bargain," quietly interrupted Rosaline, turning her sad eyes upon him. "Not a word of that kind must ever be spoken by you to me again. I will not hear it, or bear it."

"I'm not going to speak of it; it's of no use," grumbled Blase. "But a fellow who feels his life is blighted can't be wholly silent. And you might have been so happy at Trennach! You liked the place once."

"Are you going back to Trennach?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"Yes," said Blase. "I only came to London to be near her; and I shan't care to stay in it, once she is gone. Float, the druggist, has been wanting me for some time. I am to be his partner; and the whole concern will be mine after he has done with it."

"I wish you success, Blase," said Frank heartily. "You can make a better thing of the business than old Float makes, if you will."

"I mean to," answered Blase.

"I wish to take this opportunity of saying just a word to you, Blase," again spoke up Rosaline, smoothing down the crape of her gown with one finger, in what looked like nervousness. "I have informed Mr. Raynor of the conversation I had with you the night my mother died, and that you are aware of the confession he and Mr. Pine alike hold."

Frank turned quickly to Blase. "You perceive now that you have been lying under a mistake from the first, with regard to me."

"I do," said Blase: "I am never ashamed to confess myself in the wrong, once I am convinced of it. But I should never have brought it against you, Mr. Frank Raynor, never; and that, I fancy, is what you have been fearing. In future, the less said about that past night the better. Better for all of us to try and forget it."

Frank nodded an emphatic acquiescence, and took up his hat to depart. Yes, indeed, better forget it. He should have to allude to it once again, for he meant to tell the full truth to Edina; and then he would put it from his mind.

He went home, wondering whether any urgent calls had been made upon him during this morning's absence; and was standing behind the counter, questioning Sam, when a brown-looking little gentleman walked in. Frank gazed at him in amazement: for it was Mr. Max Brown.

"How are you, Raynor?" asked the traveller, grasping Frank's hand cordially.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Frank. "Have you dropped from the moon?"

"I dropped last from the Southampton train. Got into port last night."

"All well?"

"*Very* well. And my good old mother is not dead yet.

There was no mistaking the stress upon the word: there was no mistaking the perfectly easy air that pervaded Mr. Max Brown's whole demeanour. Whatever cause might have detained him so long from his home and country, it did not appear to be an unpleasant one.

"There was a young lady in the case," he acknowledged, entering on his explanation with a smile on his tanned face. "Lota Elmaine; old Elmaine the planter's only daughter. The old man would not let us be married; Lota was too young, he said; the marriage should not take place until she was in Europe. Will you believe it, Raynor, old Elmaine has kept me on like that all the blessed while I have been away, perpetually saying he was coming over here, and never coming! Never a month passed but he gave out he should sail the next."

"And so you stayed also!"

"I stayed also. I would not leave Lota to be snapped up by some covetous rascal in my absence. Truth to tell, I could not part with her on my own score."

"And where is Miss Lota Elmaine?"

"No longer in existence. She is Mrs. Max Brown."

"Then you have brought her over with you!"

"Poor Elmaine died a few months ago; and Lota got a touch of the native fever, which left her prostrate and thin: so I persuaded her to marry me off-hand that I might bring her here for change. She is better already. The voyage has done her no end of good."

"Where is she?"

"At a private hotel in Westminster. We have taken up our quarters there for the time being."

"Until you can come here," assumed Frank. "I suppose you want me to clear out as soon as possible. My wife is ill——"

"I want you to stay for good, if you will," interrupted Mr. Brown. "The business is excellent, you know, better than when I left it. If you will take to it I shall make it quite easy for you."

"What are you going to do yourself?" questioned Frank.

"Nothing at present," said Mr. Max Brown. "Lota's relatives on the mother's side live in Wales and she wants to go amongst them for a time. Perhaps I shall set up in practice there. Lota's fortune is more than enough for us, but I should be miserable with nothing to do. Will you take to this concern, Raynor?"

"I think not," replied Frank, shaking his head. "My wife does not like the locality."

"Neither would my wife like it. Well, there's no hurry: it is a good offer, and you can consider it. And, look here, Raynor: if you would like a day or two's holiday now, take it: you have been hard at work long enough. I will come down and attend for you. I should like to see my old patients again; though some of them were queer kind of people."

"Thank you," said Frank mechanically. Thought after thought was passing through his mind. No, he would not stay here. He had no further motive to seek obscurity, thank Heaven, and Daisy should be removed to a more congenial atmosphere. He must be only an assistant yet, he supposed; but better luck might come in course of time.

And better luck, though Frank knew it not, was on his way to him even then.

What with one thing and another, that day seemed destined to be somewhat of an eventful day to Frank Raynor. In the evening a letter was delivered to him from Mr. George Atkinson, requesting him to go down to Eagles' Nest on the morrow, as he wished particularly to see him.

"What can he want with me?—unless he is about to appoint me Surgeon-in-Ordinary to his high and mighty self!" quoth Frank lightly. "I should like to go. I should like to see the old place again. Can I go? Daisy is better. Max Brown has offered me a day or two's rest. Yes, I can. And I'll drop Max a note now to say his patients will be waiting for him to-morrow morning."

"A parcel for you, sir."

"A parcel for me!" repeated Mr. Atkinson to his servant, some slight surprise in his tone. For he was not in the habit of receiving parcels, and wondered what was being sent to him.

The parcel was done up rather clumsily in brown paper, and appeared, by the label on it, to have come by fast train from Hereford. Mr. George Atkinson looked on the address with curiosity. It did not bear his name but was simply directed to "The Resident of Eagles' Nest."

"Undo it, Thomas," said he.

Thomas took off the string and unfolded the brown paper. This disclosed a second envelope of paper, white: and a sealed note, similarly superscribed, lying on it. Mr. Atkinson took the note in his hand: but Thomas was quick, and in a minute the long-lost ebony desk stood revealed to view, its key tied to it.

"Oh," said Mr. Atkinson. "What does the letter say?"

The letter proved to be from Mademoiselle Delrue, the former governess at Eagles' Nest. In a long and rather complicated explanation, written partly in French, partly in English, the following facts came to light.

When about to leave Eagles' Nest; things and servants being at that time at sixes and sevens there; the kitchen maid, one Jane—or as Mademoiselle wrote it, Jeanne—a good-natured girl, had offered to assist her to pack up. She had shown Jeanne her books, stacked ready in the small study, and Jeanne had packed them in several separate parcels, for Mademoiselle's stock of books was extensive. After leaving Mrs. Raynor's, Mademoiselle Delrue had gone into a family who spent a large portion of their time in travelling on the Continent and elsewhere: much luggage could not be allowed to Mademoiselle, consequently her parcels of books had remained unpacked from that time to this. She had now settled down with the family in Herefordshire, had her parcels forwarded to her, and unpacked them. To her consternation, her grief, her horror—Mademoiselle dashed all three of the words—in one of these parcels she discovered not books, but the black desk, one that she well remembered as belonging to Major Raynor: that stupid Jeanne must have taken it to be hers, and committed the error of putting it up. Mademoiselle finished by asking whether she could be forgiven: if one slight element of consolation could peep out upon her, it was to find that the desk was empty. She had lost not an instant in sending it back to Eagles' Nest, and she begged the resident gentleman there (whose name, she had the pain of confessing had quite escaped her memory) to be so kind as forward it, together with this note of contrition and explanation, to Mrs. Raynor—whose present residence she was not acquainted with. And she had the honour to salute him with respectful cordiality.

"Don't go away, Thomas," said his master. "I want you to stay while I search the private compartment of this desk: I fancy those missing papers may be in it. Let me see? Yes, this is the way to do it.—And here's the spring."

With one touch, the false bottom was lifted out. Beneath, quietly lay the lost bonds; also a copy of Mrs. Atkinson's last will—the one made in favour of George Atkinson, and a few words written by her to himself.

"You see them, Thomas? See that I have found them here?"

"Indeed I do, sir."

"That's all, then. People are fond of saying that truth is stranger than fiction," said Mr. Atkinson to himself with a smile, as the man withdrew. He examined the bonds; ascertained, to his intense astonishment, that the money they related to had been invested in his name, and in one sole profitable undertaking. And it appeared that Mrs. Atkinson had given directions that the yearly interest arising should remain and be added to the principal, until such time as he, George Atkinson, should claim it.

"Little wonder we could not find the money," thought he. "And now—what is to be done with it?" And taking only a few minutes

for consideration, he addressed the letter, just spoken of, to Frank Raynor. Which had brought the latter down in person.

"I never heard of so romantic a thing!" cried Frank with his sweet smile and gay manner, that so won upon everybody; and was now winning upon George Atkinson, as he listened to the narrative on his arrival at Eagles' Nest. "I am sure I congratulate you very heartily. The hunts that poor uncle Francis used to have over those very bonds! And to think that they were lying all the while close under his hand!"

"I expect not much of the money would have been left for me, had he found them," significantly remarked Mr. Atkinson.

Frank laughed. "To say the truth I don't think it would. Is it very much?"

"A little over one-and-twenty thousand pounds. That is what I make it at a rough calculation—of course including the interest to this date."

"What a lot of money! You can set up a coach-and-six," added he, joking lightly.

"Ay. By the way, Mr. Francis Raynor, how came *you* to treat me so cavalierly when I was playing 'Tiger' here?—the name you and Charles were pleased to bestow upon me ——"

"Oh, Charley gave you that name," interrupted Frank, his blue eyes dancing with merriment. "He took you for a sheriff's officer about to serve a writ on him. I'm sure I never was so astonished in all my life as when Charley told me the other day that the Tiger had turned out to be, not a Tiger, but Mr. George Atkinson."

"I can understand his shunning me, under the misapprehension. But why, I ask, did you do it? You were not in fear, I presume, of a sheriff's officer?"

Frank's face grew grave at once. "No, I was not in fear of that," he said, dropping his voice, "but I had fears on another score. I had reason to fear that I was being watched—looked after—tracked; and I thought you were doing it. I am thankful to say," he added, his countenance brightening again, "that I was under a misapprehension altogether: but I only learnt that very lately. It has been a great trouble to me for years, keeping me down in the world—and yet I had done nothing myself to deserve it. I—I cannot explain further, and would be glad to drop the subject," he continued, raising his eyes ingenuously to George Atkinson's. "And I heartily beg your pardon for all the discourtesy I was guilty of. It is against my nature to show any—even to a Tiger."

"As I should fancy. It gave me a wrong impression of you. Made me think all you Raynors were alike—worthless. It's true, Frank. I was ready to be a good friend to you then, had you allowed me. And now tell me of your plans."

Frank, open-natured, full of candour, told freely all he knew about

himself. That he did not intend to remain at Mr. Max Brown's, for Daisy disliked the place, and he should look out for a more desirable situation at the West End, as assistant-surgeon.

"Why not set up in practice for yourself at the West End?' asked George Atkinson.

"Because I have nothing to set up upon," answered Frank. "That has been a bar all along. We must live, you see, while the practice was coming in."

"You could do it on seven thousand pounds!"

"Seven thousand pounds!" echoed Frank. "Why, yes! on the half of it; on the quarter. But I have no money at all, you understand."

"Yes, you have, Frank. You have that much. At least you will have it in the course of a few days!"

Frank's pleasant lips were parting with a smile. He thought it was meant as a joke.

"Look here. This money, that has come to light, of your aunt Atkinson's—you cannot, I hope, imagine for a moment that I should keep it. By law it is mine, for she willed it to me; but I shall divide it into three portions, and give them to those who are her rightful heirs: her brother's families. One portion to Mrs. Raynor; one to you; one to that angel of goodness, Edina——"

"And she is an angel," interrupted Frank hotly, carried away by the praise. "How we should all have got on without Edina, I know not. —But, Mr. Atkinson, you must not do by us this that you are talking of: at least as far as I am concerned. It would be too chivalrously generous."

"Why not by you?"

"I could not think of taking it. I have no claim upon you. Who am I, that you should benefit me?"

"I benefit you as your father's son. Were he alive this money would be his: it will now be yours. There, say no more, Frank: you cannot talk me out of doing bare justice. You will own seven thousand pounds next week, and you can lay your plans accordingly."

"I shall not know how to thank you," cried Frank, with something like a sob in his throat. "What will Max Brown say when he hears that I shall leave him for certain? He does not believe it yet."

"Max Brown can go promenading."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

It was a warm, balmy September day. The blue sky was without a cloud, the sunbeams glinted through the many-hued foliage, beginning

to change with the coming autumn, and fell on the smooth velvet lawn at Eagles' Nest. On that same green lawn stood a group of people in gala attire, for this had been a gala day with them. William Stane and Alice Raynor were married that morning. They had now just driven from the gates, around which the white satin shoes and the rice lay in showers.

It had been Mr. George Atkinson's intention to resign Eagles' Nest at the end of June, almost immediately after he first spoke of doing so. But his intention, like a great many more intentions formed in this uncertain world of ours, was frustrated. The Raynors could not so soon come down to take possession of it. Charles had given notice at once to leave Prestleigh and Preen's; but he was requested, as a favour, not to do so until the second week in August, for the office had much ado to get through its work before the long vacation. And as Charles had learnt to study other people's interests more than his own, he cheerfully said he would stay. It was a proud moment for him, standing amid the fellow clerks who had looked down upon him, when one of those very clerks copied out the deed of gift by which Eagles' Nest was transferred to him by George Atkinson, and which constituted him from henceforth its rightful and legal owner. Charles, who knew a little of law by this time, proposed to himself to commence reading for the Bar: he had acquired the habit of work and knew its value, and did not wish to be an idle man. But George Atkinson, their true friend and counsellor, spoke against it. The master of Eagles' Nest need be no idle man, he said; rather, if he did his duty faithfully, too busy a one. Better for Charles to learn how to till his land and manage his property, than to plead in a law court; better to constitute himself the active, personal manager of his estate. Charles saw the advice was sound, and meant to follow it.

Neither was Alice ready to leave London so soon as she had expected, for Mrs. Preen's intended departure from home was delayed for some weeks, and she also requested Alice to remain. Alice was nothing loth. She saw William Stane frequently, and Mrs. Preen took a warm interest in the getting ready of her wedding clothes.

But the chief impediment to their departure from Laurel Cottage, the poor home which had sheltered them so long, lay with Mrs. Raynor. Whether the reaction, of finding their miserable troubles at an end and fortune smiling again, told too strongly upon her weakened frame; or whether that headache—which you may remember she complained of the night Edina reached home with the joyful news from Eagles' Nest—was in truth the advance symptom of an illness already attacking her, certain it was that from that night Mrs Raynor drooped. The headache did not leave her; other feelings of discomfort crept on. At the end of a few days (which days Edina had spent at Frank's in attendance on his sick wife) a doctor was

called in. He pronounced it to be low fever. Edina left Daisy, who was then out of danger, to go back home, where she was now most wanted. For some weeks Mrs. Raynor did not quit her bed; and it was getting towards the end of August before they could go down to take possession of Eagles' Nest. She was better then; well, so to say; but much reduced, and still required care.

"This place will bring back your health and spirits in no time, mother dear," cried Charles, bending towards her, as they drove up to the gates of Eagles' Nest. She was leaning back in the carriage, side by side with Edina; tears were trickling down her pale cheeks. He took her hand. "You don't speak, mother."

"Charley, I was thanking God. And wondering what we can do to show our thanks to Him in the future. I know that my life will be one long, lasting, heartfelt pæan of gratitude."

Charley leaned from the carriage window. Talking to the lodge-keeper was Jetty the carpenter. Standing with them and watching the carriage was a man whom Charles remembered as one Tubbs; remembered, to his shame, what his own treatment had been of the poor fellow in the days gone by. Good heavens! that he should have been so insolent, purse-proud, haughty a young upstart! his cheeks were reddening now with the recollection. Ungenerous words and deeds generally come flashing back to us as reminders when we least want them.

Could that be Charles Raynor!—their future master? Jetty and Tubbs scarcely believed that in the pale, self-contained, gentle-faced man, who looked so much older than his years, they saw the arrogant braggart of other days; scarcely believed that the sweet smile, the cordial wave of the hand, the passing word of kindly greeting, the steadfast regard shining on them from the considerate eyes, could be indeed meant for themselves. Ah yes, they might cast out fear; it was Charles Raynor. And they saw that the good news whispered to them all by Mr. Atkinson was indeed true: that their new master would be as good and faithful a friend to them as he himself had been during these past three years.

"God ever helping me to be so!" aspirated Charles to his own heart. A whole lifetime of experience, spent in prosperity, could not have worked the change wrought in him by this comparatively short period of bitter adversity.

George Atkinson stood at the door to receive them. He had not yet quitted Eagles' Nest. For a week or so they were to be his guests in it: or he theirs. Some hearty joking and laughter was raised in this the first moment of meeting, as to which it would be, led to by a remark of Mrs. Raynor's: that she hoped he would not find the children—coming on with Alice in another carriage—troublesome guests.

"Nay, the house is yours, you know, not mine; you cannot be my

guests," laughed George Atkinson. "How do you say, Miss Raynor?"

"I say we are your guests," answered Edina. "And very glad to be."

"At least I did not think *you* would side against me," said George Atkinson, with mock resentment. "For this day, let it be so then. To-morrow I subside into my proper place, and Mrs. Raynor begins her reign."

"I have been wondering how we can ever be sufficiently grateful to God," she whispered with emotion, taking his hand in hers. "I know not how we can ever thank *you*."

"Nay, my dear lady, I have done but what was right and just; right and just in His sight, and according to His laws," was George Atkinson's solemn answer. "We must all strive for that, you know, if we would ensure peace at the last. Here come the young ones!—and that curly-headed urchin, gazing at us with his great blue eyes, must be my disappointed little candidate for the Bluecoat School."

The week passed soon; and the wedding morning dawned. And now that was past, and the bridal carriage had driven off; and the white slippers and the rice thrown, and the people had collected on the lawn under the shining afternoon sun. The only guests were Frank Raynor and his wife, who had arrived the evening before. Street the lawyer and a brother of William Stane's had come for the morning; but had already left again to catch an up train.

Frank Raynor, aided by the seven thousand pounds made over to him, had taken to the house and practice of a deceased medical man in May Fair, and was securely established there and doing fairly well. Mr. Max Brown, who, with his wife, had been spending a week with them, had disposed of the Lambeth practice to another purchaser. Daisy was happy again, and just as pretty and blooming as in the old days at Trennach. Frank, without entering into actual particulars (he did that only to Edina), had disclosed to her enough of that past night's fatal work to account for his interest in, and care of, Mrs. Bell and poor Rosaline. Fifteen times at least in the day and night, Daisy, with much contrition and many repentant tears, would whisper prayers to her husband to forgive—forgive her; saying at the same time she could never forgive herself. Frank would kiss the tears away and tell her to let bygones be bygones, that they were beginning life afresh. Rosaline had sailed for her new home and country—was probably by this time nearing its shores. Most earnestly was it to be hoped she would regain happiness there.

Who so proud as Mrs. Daisy, flitting about the lawn with her three months' old baby in her arms, resplendent in its white robes! The little thing was named Francis George, and George Atkinson was its godfather. So many interests had claimed their attention that day, that

not a minute had been found for inquiries and answers; and it was only now, at the first quiet moment, that Mr. Atkinson was beginning to inquire how Frank was prospering.

"First-rate," said sanguine Frank, his kindly face in a glow. "I wish with all my heart every beginner was getting on as well as I!"

"And my mother has come out of her tantrums," put in Daisy irreverently, handing the baby over to its nurse, who stood by. "I had quite a long letter from her yesterday morning, Mr. Atkinson, in which she graciously forgives me, and says I shall have my proper share of the money that my uncle Tom left to her last year. Which will be at least some thousands of pounds."

"It never rains but it pours, you know," smiled Frank. "Money drops in now we don't particularly want it."

"And so," added Daisy, "we mean to set up our brougham. Frank needs one badly."

"Frank needs it for use, and you for show," cried George Atkinson, laughing at her.

"Yes, that is just it," acknowledged Daisy. "I expect I shall not get much use out of it, though, as his practice increases.—When do you take possession of your town house, Mr. Atkinson? You will not be very far from us."

"I go up to it from Eagles' Nest to-morrow," was the reply. "Perhaps not to remain long in it at present. I am not yet able to form my plans."

"Not able to form your plans!" echoed Daisy, in her saucy, engaging way, her eyes, bright as amber, gazing into his, questioningly. "Why, I should have thought you might have laid your plans on the first of January for all the year, having nobody to consult but yourself."

"But if I am uncertain—capricious?" returned he, in a half-jesting tone.

"Ah, that's a different thing. I should not have thought you that at all. But—pray tell me, Mr. Atkinson! What do the people down here say, now they have found out that it was you, yourself, who lived incog. amidst them three years ago?"

"They say nothing to me. I daresay they conjecture that I had my reasons for it. Or perhaps they think I was only amusing myself," continued George Atkinson, glancing at Edina.

Edina smiled at him in return. All's well that ends well: and that incognito business had turned out very well in the end. To her only, had George Atkinson spoken out fully of the motives that swayed him, the impressions he received.

Edina stood by in all her finery. She had never been so smart in her life: and perhaps had never looked so well. A mauve silk dress, and a lovely pink rose in her bosom, nestling amid white lace.

Edina was rich now—as *she* looked on riches. Seven thousand pounds, and all her own! She had held out strenuously against receiving it, pointing out to George Atkinson that it would be wrong and unfair to give it her, as her Aunt Ann had never meant to leave her any money at all. But Edina's arguments and objections proved of no avail. Mr. Atkinson quietly shut his ears, and transferred the money over to her, in spite of her protests. The first use Edina made of her cheque-book was to send one hundred pounds to Mr. Pine, that he might distribute it among the poor of Trennach.

Like George Atkinson, as he had just avowed, Edina had not laid out her plans. She could not decide where her chief residence should be. Mrs. Raynor and Charles naturally pressed her to stay at Eagles' Nest: but she hesitated to comply. A wish to have a home of her own, some little place of her own setting up, was making itself heard in her heart: and she could visit Eagles' Nest from time to time. Should the little homestead be near to them?—or at Trennach? It was this that she could not decide. But she must decide very shortly, for she wished to give them her decision on the morrow.

Turning away from the busy talkers, from the excited children capering about; Kate in white, and little Bob, not in a long-skirted blue coat and yellow stockings, but in black velvet and knickerbockers; Edina wandered away, her mind full of it, and sat down on a bench o'ershadowed by clustering trees, out of sight and sound. The small opening in the trees before her disclosed a bit of the far-off scenery—the Kentish hills, dotted with their varying foliage, lying under the calm, pale blue sky.

"I like Trennach," argued she with herself. "I love it, for it was my girlhood's home; and I love those in it. I could almost say with Ruth, 'The people there shall be my people, and their God my God.' On the other hand, are the claims of Eagles' Nest, and of Frank and Daisy. I love them all. Mary Raynor says she cannot get on unless I am near her: and perhaps the young ones need me too. If I only knew!"

"Knew what?" cried a voice at her elbow—for she had spoken the last sentence aloud.

The interruption came from George Atkinson. He had been looking for her in and out, and at last had found her. Edina blushed at having allowed her words to be heard: as he sat down beside her.

"I was only wishing I knew whether it would be better for me to settle near London or at Trennach," she answered with a smile. "It was very silly for me to speak aloud."

"Charles Raynor has just informed us that you intend to remain for good at Eagles' Nest."

"Oh no, I do not. I have never said I would; and to-morrow I shall tell them why. I should like to have a little place of my own;

my very own. Either at Trennach, or in this neighbourhood: or—perhaps—in London."

"Both in this neighbourhood and in London," he interrupted. "And, sometimes sojourning elsewhere: at the seaside, or at Trennach. That is what I should recommend."

"You have made me a millionaire in my own estimation, but not such a millionaire as that," laughed Edina.

"The houses are ready for you, and waiting."

Some peculiarity in his tone made her heart stand still. He turned and took her hands in his, speaking softly.

"Edina! Don't you know—have you not guessed—that I want you in my houses, in my home? Surely you will come to me!—you will not say me nay! I know that it is late, sadly late, for me to say this to you: but I will try and make you happy as my wife."

Her pulses went rushing on tumultuously. As the words fell on her ear and heart, the truth was suddenly opened to her—that she loved him still.

"I am no longer young, George," she whispered, the tears slowly coursing down her cheeks.

"Too young for me, Edina. The world may say so."

"And I—I don't know that others can spare me."

"Yes, they can. Had I been wise I should have secured you in the days so long gone by, Edina. I have never ceased to care for you. Oh my best friend, my first and only love, say you will come and make the sunshine of my home! *Say* you will."

"I will," she whispered.

And Mr. George Atkinson drew her to him and sheltered her face on his breast. What a refuge for her! After all the sadness and vicissitudes of her life, what a haven of rest it felt to Edina.

"There shall be no delay: we cannot afford it. In less than a month, Edina, I shall take you away. And that seven thousand pounds that you tried hard to fight me over—you can now transfer it to the others, if you like."

"As you will," she breathed. "All as you will from henceforth, George. I have found my home: and my master."

"God bless you, my dear one! May He be ever with us, as now, and bless us both to the end, in this world and in the next."

The little birds sang sweetly in the branches above; the distant hills were fair and smiling; the pale blue sky had never a cloud: all nature spoke of peace. And within their own hearts reigned that holy peace and rest which comes alone from Heaven; the Peace that passeth all understanding.

THE END.

NIGH AT HAND.

THROUGH mists that hide from me my God, I see
A shapeless form : Death comes, and beckons me :
I scent the odours of the Spirit land :
And, with commingled joy and terror, hear
The far-off whispers of a white-robed band :—
Nearer they come—yet nearer—yet more near :
Is it rehearsal of a "Welcome" song
That will be in my heart and ear, ere long?
Do these bright spirits wait till Death may give
The Soul its franchise—and I die to live?

Does Fancy send the breeze from yon green mountain?
(I am not dreaming when it cools my brow.)
Are they the sparkles of an actual fountain
That gladden and refresh my spirit now?
How beautiful the burst of holy light!
How beautiful the day that has no night!
Open! ye everlasting gates! I pray—
Waiting, but yearning—for that perfect day!
Hark! to these Allelujahs! "hail! all hail!"
Shall *they* be echoed by a sob and wail?
Friends, "gone before," these are your happy voices :
The old, familiar sounds : my soul rejoices!

Ah! through the mists, the great white throne I see :
And now a Saint in Glory beckons me.
Is Death a foe to dread? the Death who giveth
Life—the unburthened Life that ever liveth!

Who shrinks from Death? Come when he will or may,
The night he brings will bring the risen day :
His call—his touch—we neither seek nor shun :
His life is ended when his work is done.
Our spear and shield no cloud of Death can dim :
He triumphs not o'er us—we conquer him!

How long, O Lord, how long, ere I shall see
The myriad glories of a holier sphere?
And worship in Thy presence :—not as here
In chains that keep the shackled Soul from Thee!

My God! let that Eternal Home be near!

Master! I bring to Thee a Soul opprest :
"Weary and heavy laden :" seeking rest :
Strengthen my Faith : that, with my latest breath,
I greet Thy messenger of Mercy—DEATH!

S. C. HALL.

THE FRENCH POOR OF LONDON.

THERE is a house in London called the "Maison des Étrangers," 59, Greek Street, Soho, where the French Poor of our metropolis are able to go for help and advice in their various states of trouble and distress. The Superintendent, or Secretary, is Mr. S. R. Brown, one of the City missionaries, and his whole time is devoted to the French. Religious meetings are here held frequently, and are well attended: and as the rule is, never to give away anything at these réunions—even so little as a cup of coffee—it is evident that they who come are not actuated by motives of self-interest.

It is well known that the City Mission does not furnish its officers with funds to relieve want and misery. Even if they discover a case of absolute starvation, they are not provided with the smallest sum wherewith to meet its most pressing needs. And as the missionaries are for the most part poorly paid themselves, and have wives and families of their own to provide for, they are quite unable to give away anything out of their own very slender incomes. The City Mission is established solely to minister to the spiritual wants of the poor: and the missionaries consequently have to confine themselves to that one end and aim.

But the reader will readily conceive how hard it is to do good to the soul, when the body is suffering from the pangs of hunger. He will readily apprehend, too, how painful it is to the missionary to see want and destitution that he is unable to alleviate; and how much more difficult his own work becomes in consequence. It is as if he said to them: "Yes, your temporal wants are great, but you must put these aside. I can only talk to you about your soul. I can do nothing for your body."

And yet the success Mr. Brown has met with is genuine, if it may be judged by the apparent results obtained. Every Sunday afternoon there is a prayer-meeting and sermon, and the room in Greek Street is filled with attentive listeners. Every Monday a mothers' meeting is held, presided over by one of the several ladies who have given themselves up to the work. During certain evenings of the week, other meetings are held for men and women together, and are always well attended. At all these meetings, let it be repeated, nothing whatever in any shape or form is given away. When first instituted it was predicted that unless coffee and bread and butter were doled out, they would be a failure: the people would never come for religious instruction alone. The result has proved the contrary. The assemblage

increases so much in numbers that the want of a larger room is beginning to be felt.

But this paper is not to be devoted to the spiritual wants of the French Poor. These are being met as far as is at present possible. It is their bodily necessities and privations that I wish to place before the reader.

Of all unhappy conditions, few are more sad, or more quickly touch the sympathies, than the state of those who find themselves penniless and workless, in a foreign country, often in the midst of an unintelligible language.

Very little is known by the outside world of the hardships and misery of the French Poor now living in London. There has always been a greater or lesser colony of French in the metropolis, round about the neighbourhood of Soho. But since the war of 1870 the number has very largely increased. England, and more especially London, is a refuge for the destitute: and during that disastrous period they came over in flocks. Their reasons for doing so were various. Some fled from Paris before the siege; fled from the coming horrors. Some escaped for Communist reasons; others deserted from the army. Each and all had their motives, more or less good, or bad. Many came over to inevitable want and misery; some to death. Speaking not a word of the language, friendless and unknown, what chance had they?

Many who thus emigrated fell into poverty and its attendant evils from no fault of their own; others have brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly: or conduct worse than folly. But should the latter for this reason be left to bear their self-imposed burden unaided? should they be left without a helping hand which might lift them up once more; and by proving to them that there is some good in the world, possibly stimulate them into becoming good themselves? We know WHO it is that maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

A description of what has been actually seen of the misery of these French Poor, will enable the reader to realise their condition far more clearly than whole pages devoted to the theory of suffering, or the wretchedness of supposed examples.

I accompanied Mr. Brown one day in his rounds of visitation. We entered a cold, dirty-looking house, and went down an inconceivably dirty staircase into a kitchen. Light penetrated with difficulty through the area windows, and the room was in semi-darkness. It was a bitterly cold day. There was no fire in the grate: the room was paved with flags. A damp, earthy smell pervaded the place; a smell peculiar to these underground rooms. On a bed in a corner lay a poor wretched Frenchwoman, grey headed, sixty years of age.

She was groaning with rheumatic pains and crying from hunger. She had gone to bed to keep herself warm, having nothing wherewith to buy coals. On the table was a crust of bread hard enough to be a week old. A glance into the cupboard proved it bare enough. The woman had no sheet to cover her. She had nothing but one thin blanket, and what clothes she possessed were thrown upon the bed. She was a Belgian. Her friends allowed her £1 a month. This was all she had to live upon, and the greater portion of it went in rent. In her own country she had once been well off, and in a respectable position, and this was the state to which she was reduced.

Yet the missionary had to do his duty. He had to talk to the woman about the state of her soul; to tell her of the great plan of salvation; to endeavour to enlighten her understanding and reach her heart. In a word, to bring her to repentance. But he was not furnished with the funds wherewith to buy the poor creature a loaf of bread, or a cup of tea, or a handful of coals.

Further on we entered a shoemaker's. The man is a Russian, his wife a German. They are now doing well, and earning a good living; helped thereto by friends. When the missionary first knew them, they were in the very depths of penury, and several of their children had died from actual want.

At the back of these people; in three rooms one above another, detached from the house, and as it were forming a small house of themselves; dwelt a French family, consisting of father, mother, and three girls. It was a difficult task to climb the narrow staircase; scarce possible to turn round in the rooms. The lower room was used for coal, and as a receptacle for odds and ends. It was, in fact, nothing more or less than a cellar above ground. The confined earthy smell of an over-crowded cemetery in some of those poverty-stricken, out-of-the-way German villages was as nothing compared with the dreadful effluvium that ascended from this cellar to the upper chambers.

In the top room—it was no larger than a closet—on a bed of sickness, lay the poor mother. She had that morning been to the hospital for advice and medicine, and the journey had exhausted her small stock of strength. She could not tell what was the matter with her, except that she was in pain. The girls were stunted in their growth; they all looked emaciated: the pale, pinched, unhealthy hue of poverty, and want, and bad atmosphere. They had long been in terrible straits, but though still very, very poor, they were no longer in actual need. The father had obtained work. And through all their misery, the woman told us, she and her husband had often gone to bed famished, in order that the children might have the crust of bread that was not enough for all.

Oh, children, one and all, what do you not owe your parents, who endure so much for you, even to the death?

But there is a limit to endurance. The poor mother has since died: of want and hardship.

We went further on. A Frenchman, hard-working and industrious, had fallen ill. The peculiar nature of his trade had brought on liver complaint, and affected his eyesight. For a time he was compelled to go into a hospital, leaving a wife and nine children totally unprovided for. We saw them all, and within six hours of our visit the wife was laid upon a bed of sickness, and another little mouth had come into the world to be fed. Their trouble and privations may be imagined.

In a street hard by, the man had an old father and mother living, both getting on towards seventy. They, too, are industrious and hardworking. They never beg. They earn their livelihood by taking out French papers morning and night, and leaving them at the houses of the various subscribers. The old man goes his round, the old woman hers. For two hours in the morning and two hours at night they are trudging the streets of London. The old man is nearly blind, and has to be guided by one of his little grandchildren.

It is hard work, at their time of life, but it is their only means of subsistence, and it gains them fifteen shillings a week. About five shillings a week goes in expenses; rent, &c.; leaving them five shillings a week each for food and raiment. It was afternoon when we went to them. The staircase was pitch dark, and we had to grope our way; their room was on the second floor; a small, miserable place, for which week by week they paid four shillings and sixpence. The rents obtained in this neighbourhood for the most bare and comfortless rooms, would scarcely be credited. The old man was lying on the bed; the wife was asleep, arms and head upon the hard table. Both were resting, preparatory to going their evening rounds.

Another woman, a few doors off, had parted with everything she possessed in the world, with the exception of just sufficient clothing for decency. She had not even a cloak or shawl left to go out in. There was not a chair in the room; not a spark of fire in the grate. The atmosphere was freezing. The room contained not an atom of food. The poor creature was in bed, ill and apparently heartbroken. She could not speak for her sobs. She had not tasted food for three days, with the exception of a crust brought in by a neighbour. Trouble seemed to have turned her brain. Yet even here the missionary could do nothing, as he might have done had there been a private fund to draw upon. Happily for the poor woman her case was made known and relieved.

Many of the French are single men, and the privations they endure affect only themselves. How some of these men exist is a great puzzle: a mystery. At night, if they have fourpence in their pockets, they can obtain a shake-down in a registered lodging-house. If pen-

niless, they are now and then allowed to sleep on a chair, with the table for a pillow, and so pass the hours of darkness. But this is a favour rarely granted. As a rule, if they have not the fourpence to pay for their bed, they must spend the night in the streets.

In one of these lodging-houses we discovered a poor French boy of some sixteen years of age. He was a good-looking youth, and had been a respectable peasant in France. He had been enticed over by a companion, who was in service, to London, and had returned home for a short holiday. As soon as he reached England, his friend deserted him, and the boy found himself alone, friendless, and in despair. When we first found him his clothes were all but gone. He had no shirt to his back; nothing on him but an old, ragged pair of trousers, and a still more dilapidated coat. He was half-starved, and was altogether in a deplorable condition. He was clothed and fed; and Mr. Brown, by representing the case in proper quarters, was enabled to send him back to his own country.

A poor Frenchwoman one day made her appearance at the Maison des Etrangers. She had been sent over by the French Government, her father having been a British subject. She must at one time have been a remarkably good-looking woman, with thin aquiline features that bore traces of refinement. She declared herself well educated and possessed of a good knowledge of music. The woman had a small bundle with her, but not a penny in her pocket.

Time went on. The woman could get no occupation. At last she was driven to sing in the streets. Now and then she obtained a night's lodging in a refuge; more often than not it was passed in the open air, on door-steps, or wearily threading the streets. Many a day vanished without food.

I saw her again after an interval of time. The woman was scarcely to be recognised. She looked twenty years older. From being tall and upright, she had become bent and shrunken; lame and footsore. Heart and courage were gone. She was utterly broken down. Even the mind seemed weakened. A subscription was raised for her. Mr. Brown bought her a stock of second-hand clothes; sent her to the St. Giles's baths, and the woman reappeared a new creature. She was then sent back to France, where, it is to be hoped, she is enjoying happier and brighter days.

It was reported that in a street near at hand a poor Frenchman was lying ill of consumption. I happened to call at Greek Street the day Mr. Brown was going to visit the man, and accompanied him. The poor fellow was in bed. He looked indeed ill and emaciated. He had been a hair-dresser in Manchester, well to do and well off, until illness overtook him. Then he came to London with his wife and child. It is what they all do. These poor people, unfortunately, when things get down in the world with them, invariably fancy that change

of scene will bring change of fortune. They leave a place where, perhaps, they are known; and where, with patience, things might grow brighter; and come up to London, where they have neither friends nor chance of success. London they imagine to be the Open Sesame to everything that is good; where they cannot fail to get on. This has been a delusion, not with the French only, from time immemorial: and it will continue to be so.

The poor man's wife went out washing, and supported him as far as she was able. But she, too, was taken ill and had to enter a hospital. They had one boy, ten years old. Here, then, were they, helpless and destitute. The missionary began to talk to him about his future state, but the man was too weak to bear much; he turned his head away, unwilling that his tears should be seen. After a time he was admitted into the Brompton hospital, only to leave it as incurable. With help they managed to get to France, and about a fortnight ago he died.

It would be easy to multiply cases, but space forbids. And of what use? Some indeed there are of so sad a nature, that, were they detailed, the reader would be induced to close the book and read no further. Cases, in their suffering, too terrible for the pages of a magazine.

Let one case be cited with a happier termination.

There came in one day a young Frenchman, twenty-two years old to Greek Street. At that time, though I knew the Maison des Etrangers existed, I had never seen it. This young man was in a state of utter destitution, and was sent by Mr. Brown to Ham Yard Soup Kitchen and Refuge, Great Windmill Street, Leicester Square. Here he was taken in by Mr. Stevens, the superintendent, who kept him on week after week to help in the work, in the hope that something would turn up for him. He had been there some time when I chanced to call at the soup kitchen, and was told about him. He was sent for, and appeared in his shirt-sleeves, tall, pale, and cadaverous, but evidently of bygone respectability. Eventually he gave me his history, which was subsequently corroborated in every particular. He had fallen into destitution from no fault of his own. His conduct all through had been quite free from blame. He was well connected, and had received a good classical education.

He came to London with no money in his pocket, no roof to shelter him. For ten days in cold and hunger he walked the streets, and at night slept on door-steps: wet, weary, and footsore. There was a delicacy of constitution about him—a tendency to consumption—that would quickly have yielded to such hardships. Happily, at the end of the ten days, he chanced to pass the Maison des Etrangers, entered it, and obtained shelter.

When I first saw him at the Refuge he was in a state of despondency. He had lost all hope, all moral courage, and did not care whether he

lived or died. Too proud to let his friends know of his condition, he had long ceased to correspond with them, and they probably looked upon him as dead. He had scarcely any clothes to his back, or boots to his feet. The superintendent had even once sent him out for some days as a "sandwich" man, with an advertisement board upon his back, in order that he might earn a trifle to buy himself a shirt. This he did in the depths of winter snow.

At this time he was really sinking. Hope, all the mental qualities that sustain a man, had gone. He would probably have died. But the case was made known; friends came to the rescue; the young man was once more raised to a state of respectability and independence. Hope soon came back, and self-respect, and moral courage. His oldest friends would fail to know him as he was then, and as he is now. For a considerable time he has been in a position of responsibility, the companion of gentlemen and men of learning. His health has become established; nothing could be more satisfactory, more upright than his conduct. And this is only the result of a little help, judiciously administered.

Not far from Greek Street, in the back room of a second floor, dwells an old Frenchwoman in her 75th year. She has been a hard worker—a dressmaker—all her life. Now strength is failing. She is getting too old to work; people will not employ her. A look at her good, placid old face, is sufficient guarantee for a well-spent life. She receives two shillings a week from the French Society in London Wall, and has two shillings and sixpence to pay for her room. The source of whatever else she may receive is charity.

It is for such cases as these, and many others, that funds are needed. The missionary in his walks comes across every species of want and destitution, which he is generally quite unable to relieve. It requires, of course, both care and judgment in giving away money. It must be applied where it is really needed; where it will relieve necessity and not encourage idleness. There are, doubtless, numberless people who would gladly contribute to such an object if it were only placed before them. It is not the inclination to give that is generally wanting—at least, let us hope not—it is the opportunity, the want of knowing where to give. The reader who may feel inclined to send any contribution towards the alleviation of so much misery, may be assured that it will be money well spent and carefully distributed. Even the smallest sums—sent in stamps or otherwise—would be gladly received by Mr. S. R. Brown, 59, Greek Street, Soho. And when it is remembered that even fourpence will give a night's lodging to some poor man or woman; who might otherwise have to pass a night ill-clad and shivering on a door-step, or freezing as they tramped the cold streets; it will be seen that no sum is small, in comparison with the end obtained. Mr. Brown would welcome a visit from anyone

who cared to look further into the matter. He is to be found there on Tuesdays and Thursdays always, at two o'clock. The greater part of his time is naturally spent in visiting the poor.

Nothing but experience ; a personal and frequent visit amongst the poor of London, whether French or English; can enable anyone to realize the terrible misery that exists. Charitable societies, the prevailing system of charity, utterly fail to meet the demands of the case. Nay, it is this very "system" which is so fatal. There is almost as much trouble in obtaining relief from these "societies," as in getting a Bill passed through Parliament ; nearly as much red-tapeism existing in the one case as in the other. From clerks you have to get to under-secretaries, from under-secretaries to upper; thence to boards, to committees, to meetings, to deliberations, to opinions, to divisions, to unanimous agreements : to five hundred technical absurdities, which run away with time, and, what is worse, with nearly all the available funds. I have known that whilst some of these so-called "charitable societies" have been pretending week after week to be enquiring into the merits of a case, the wretched applicant has positively died of starvation—died for want of the relief sought, and so cruelly withheld.

But in alms privately administered all this is avoided. Thus it would be a happy thing for these poor French in London if there were a fund to draw upon for their greatest needs. And they who, even by the smallest contribution, help to swell this fund, will have done a good work.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

WINTER RAINS.

DRIP, drip, drip, with a sullen sound,
No summer crystals, bright and glancing,
Over the thankful meadows dancing,
But a wintry storm on a wreck-strewn ground.

No folded cloud that may drift away,
No sudden burst of sunny splendour,
Making the heart grow glad and tender,
Only a leaden and changeless grey.

"Into each life some rain must fall,"
Seemingly sent by a pitiless doom,
Yet no one walketh in constant gloom
With God's sun shining above it all.

ANNE.

III.

THE blinds of a house closely drawn, the snow drifting against the windows outside, and somebody lying dead upstairs, cannot be called a lively state of things. Mrs. Lewis and her daughters, Julia and Fanny Podd, sitting over the fire in the darkened dining-room at Maythorn Bank, were finding it just the contrary.

When Dr. Lewis, growing worse and worse during their sojourn at Lake's Boarding House at Worcester the previous autumn, had one day plucked-up courage to open his mind to his physician, telling him that he was pining for the quiet of his own little cottage home, and that the stir and racket at Lake's was more than he could stand, Dr. Malden peremptorily told Mrs. Lewis that he must have his wish, *and go*. So she had to give in, and prepared to take him; though it went frightfully against the grain. That was three months back; he had been getting weaker and more imbecile ever since, and now, just as Christmas was turned, he had sunk quietly away to his rest.

Anne, his only, loving, gentle daughter, had been his constant companion and attendant. She read to him, she talked to him, she wrapped great coats about him and took him out to walk on sunshiny days in the open walk by the laurels. It was well for Anne that she was thus incessantly occupied, for it diverted her mind from the misery left there by the unwarrantable conduct of Mr. Angerstyne. To forget him, as she strove to do, was a hard and bitter task: but the indignation she felt at the man's deceit and cruel conduct, was materially helping her. Once since she had seen his name in the Times: it was amidst the list of visitors staying at some nobleman's country house: Henry Angerstyne. And the thrill that passed through her from head to foot as the name caught her eye, the sudden stopping and then rushing violently on of her life's blood, convinced her how little she had forgotten him.

"But I shall forget him in time," she said to herself, pressing her hand upon her wildly-beating heart. "In time, God helping me."

And from that moment she redoubled her care and thought for her father; and he died blessing her and her love for him. And now she was left amidst strangers, or worse than strangers; she seemed not to have a friend to turn to in the wide world.

Dr. Lewis had died on Monday morning. This was Tuesday. Mrs. Lewis had been seeing people to-day and yesterday, giving her

orders; but never once consulting Anne, or paying her the compliment to say, Would you like it to be this way, or that?

"How on earth any human being could have pitched upon this wretched out-of-the-world place, Crabb, to settle down in, puzzles me completely," suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Lewis, bending forward to stir the fire.

"He must have been a lunatic," acquiesced Julia, irreverently alluding to the poor man who was lying in the room above.

"Not a decent shop in the place! Not a dressmaker who can cut out a properly-fitting skirt! Be quiet Fanny: you need not *dance*."

"One does not know what to do," grumbled Fanny, ceasing to shuffle, and returning to her seat. "But I should like to know, mamma, about our mourning."

"I think I shall go to Worcester to-day and order it," spoke up Mrs. Lewis briskly, after a pause of doubt. "I don't mind the weather. Julia, ring the bell."

Anne; poor Anne; came in to answer the bell. She had no choice: Sally was out on an errand.

"Just see that we have a tray in with the cold meat, Anne, at half-past twelve. We must go to Worcester about the mourning ——"

"To Worcester!" involuntarily interrupted Anne in her surprise.

"There's no help for it, though it's not the thing I would choose to do, of course," said Mrs. Lewis coldly. "One cannot provide proper things here: bonnets especially. I will get you a bonnet at the same time. And we must have a bit of something, hot and nice, for tea, when we come home."

"Very well," sighed Anne.

In the afternoon, Anne sat in the same room alone, busy over some black work, on which her tears dropped slowly from time to time. When it was growing dusk, Mr. Coney and the young Rector of Timberdale came in together, having met at the gate. Herbert Tanerton did not forget that his late stepfather and Dr. Lewis were half-brothers. Anne brushed away the signs of her tears, laid down her work, and stirred the fire into a blaze.

"Now, my lass," said the farmer, in his plain, homely way, but he always meant kindly, "I've just heard that that step-mother of yours went off to Worcester to day with those two dandified girls of hers, and so I thought I'd drop in while the coast was clear. I confess I don't like her: and I say that somebody ought to look a bit to you and your interests."

"And I," added Herbert Tanerton, "wish to express my deep regret for your loss, Miss Lewis, and to assure you of my true sympathy. You will think my visit a late one, but I had a—a service this afternoon." He would not say a funeral.

"You are both very kind, very," said Anne, her eyes again filling,

"and I thank you for thinking of me. I feel isolated from all: this place at best is but strange to me after my life's home in France. It seems that I have not a friend in the world."

"Yes, you have," said the farmer; "and if my wife had not been staying with our sick daughter at Worcester, she'd have been in to tell you the same. My lass, you are just going, please, to make a friend of *me*. And you won't think two or three questions, that I'd like to put, impertinent, will you?"

"That I certainly will not," said Anne.

"Well, now, to begin with: Did your father make a will?"

"Oh, yes. I hold it."

"And do you chance to know how the property is left?"

"To me. No name but my own is mentioned in it."

"Then you'll be all right," said Mr. Coney. "I feared he might have been leaving somebody else some. You will have about £250 a-year: and that's enough for a young girl. When your father first came over, he spoke to me of his income and his means."

"I—I fear the income will be somewhat diminished from what it was," hesitated Anne, turning red at having to confess so much, because it would tell against her stepmother. "My father has had to sell out a good deal lately; to entrench upon his capital. I think the trouble it gave him hastened his end."

"Sold out for what?" asked old Coney.

"For bills, and—and debts, that came upon him."

"Her bills? Her debts?"

Anne did not expressly answer, but old Coney caught up the truth, and nodded his head in wrath. He as good as knew it before.

"Well, child, I suppose you may reckon, at the worst, on a clear two hundred a-year, and you can live on that."

"I should like to go back to France," sighed Anne, recalling the bitter misery that England had brought her: first in her new stepmother, then in Mr. Angerstyne, and now in her father's death. "I have many dear friends in France who will take every care of me."

"Well, I don't know," cried old Coney, with a blank look. "France may be very well for some people; but I'd a'most as lieve go to the gallows as there. Don't you like England?"

"I should like it well, if I—if I could be happy in it," she answered, turning red again at the thought of him who had marred her happiness. "How much of the income ought I to pay over yearly to Mrs. Lewis?" she questioned. "Half?"

"*Half!* No!" burst forth old Coney, coughing down a strong word which had nearly slipped out. "You will give her none. *None.* A pretty idea of justice you must have, Anne Lewis."

"But it would be fair to give it her," argued Anne. "My father married her."

"Oh, did he, though! She married him. *I* know. Other folks know. You will give her none, and allow her none. She is a hard, scheming, deceitful brick-bat of a woman. What made her lay hold of your poor weakened father, and play off upon him her wiles and her guiles, and marry him, right or wrong?" ran on old Coney, getting purple enough for apoplexy. "She did it for a home; she did it that she might get her back debts paid; that's what. She has had her swing as long as his poor life lasted, and put you down as if you were a changeling; we have all seen *that;* and now that her short day's over, she must go back again to her own ways and means. Ask the parson there what he thinks."

The parson in his cold sententious way, that was so much more suited to an old bishop than a young rector, avowed that he thought with Mr. Coney. He could not see that Mrs. Lewis's few months of marriage entitled her (all attendant circumstances being taken into consideration) to deprive Miss Lewis of any portion of her patrimony.

"You are sure you have got the will all tight and safe?" resumed Mr. Coney. "I wouldn't answer for her not stealing it. Ah, you may laugh, young lassie, but I don't like that woman. Miss Dinah Lake was talking to me a bit the other day; she don't like her, either."

Anne was smiling at his vehement partisanship. She rose, unlocked a desk that stood on the side-table, and brought out a parchment, folded and sealed. It was subscribed "Will of Thomas Lewis, M.D."

"Here it is," she said. "Papa had it drawn up by an English lawyer just before we left France. He gave it to me, as he was apt to mislay things himself, charging me to keep it safely."

"And mind you do keep it safely," enjoined old Coney.

"But wait a minute," interposed the clergyman. "Does not marriage—a subsequent marriage—render a will invalid?"

"Bless my heart, no: much justice there'd be in that!" retorted old Coney, who knew about as much of law as he did of the moon. And Mr. Tanerton said no more; he was not certain; and supposed the older and more experienced man might be right.

Anne sighed as she locked the will up again. She was both just and generous; and she knew she should be sure to hand over to Mrs. Lewis the half of whatever income it might give her.

"Well, my girl," said the farmer, as they rose to leave, "if you want me, or anything I can do, you just send Sally over, and I'll be here in a jiffy."

"It is to be at Timberdale, I conclude," whispered Herbert Tanertoo, alluding to the funeral.

"I don't know. My father wished it; he said he wished to lie by his brother. But Mrs. Lewis—Here they come, I think."

They came in with snowy bonnets and red noses, stamping the slush off their shoes. It was a good walk from the station. Mrs. Lewis

had expected to get a fly there; one was generally in waiting: but somebody jumped out of the train before she did, and secured it. It made her feel cross and look cross.

"Such a wretched trapes!" she was beginning in a vinegar tone; but at sight of the gentlemen her face and voice smoothed down to oil. She begged them to resume their seats; but they refused.

"We were just asking about the funeral," the farmer stayed to say. "It is to be at Timberdale?"

Up went Mrs. Lewis's handkerchief to her eyes. "Dear Mr. Coney, I think not. Crabb will be better."

"But, he wished to lie at Timberdale."

"Crabb will be so much cheaper—and less trouble," returned the widow with a sob. "It is as well to avoid useless expense."

"Cheaper!" cried old Coney, his face purple again with passion, so much did he dislike her and her ways. "Not cheaper at all. *Dearer.* Dearer, ma'am. Must have a hearse and coach, any way: and Herbert Tanerton here won't charge fees if it's done at Timberdale."

"Oh, just as you please, my dear sir. And if *he* wished it, poor dear! Yes, yes; Timberdale of course. Anywhere."

They got out before she had dried her eyes—or pretended at it. Julia and Fanny brought in some bandboxes, which had been in the passage. Mrs. Lewis forgot her tears, and put back her cloak.

"Which is Anne's?" she asked. "Oh, this one"—beginning to undo one of the boxes. "My own will be sent to-morrow night. I bought yours quite plain, Anne."

Very plain indeed was the bonnet she handed out. Plain and common, and made of the cheapest materials; one that a lady would not like to put upon her head. Julia and Fanny were trying theirs on at the chimney-glass. Gay bonnets, theirs, glistening with black beads and flowers. The bill lay open on the table, and Anne read the cost: her own, twelve shillings; the other two, thirty-three each. Mrs. Lewis made a grab at the bill, and crushed it into her pocket.

'I knew you would prefer it plain," said she. "For real mourning, it is always a mistake to have things too costly."

"True," acquiesced Anne; "but yet—they should be *good*."

It seemed to her that to wear this bonnet would be very like disrespect to the dead. She silently determined to buy a better as soon as she had the opportunity.

Of all days, for weather, the one of the funeral was about the worst. Sleet, snow, rain, and wind. The Squire had a touch of lumbago; he could not face it; and old Coney came bustling in to say that I was to attend in his place. Anne wanted Johnny Ludlow to go all along, he added; her father had liked him; only there was no room before in the coach.

"Yes, yes," cried the Squire, "Johnny of course. He is not afraid of lumbago. Make haste and get into your black things, lad."

Well, it was shivery, as we rolled along in the old mourning coach, behind the hearse: Mr. Coney and the Podds' cousin-lawyer from Birmingham on one side; I and Cole, the doctor, opposite. The sleet pattered against the windows, the wind whistled in our ears. The lawyer kept saying "eugh," and shaking his shoulders, telling us he had a cold in his head; and looked just as stern as at the wedding.

All was soon over: Herbert Tanerton did not read slowly to-day: and we got back to Maythorn Bank. Cole had left us: he stopped the coach en route, and cut across a field to see a patient: but Mr. Coney drew me into the house with him after the lawyer.

"You can come in along with me, Johnny," he whispered. "The poor girl has no relation or friend to back her up, and I shall stay with her while the will's read."

Mrs. Lewis, in a new widow's cap as big as a house, and the two girls in shining jet chains, were sitting in state. Anne came in the next minute, her face pale, her eyes red. We all sat down; and for a short while looked at one another in silence, like mutes.

"Any will to be read: I'm told there is one," spoke the lawyer—who had, as Fanny Podd whispered to me, a wife at home as sour as himself. "If so, it had better be produced: I have to catch a train."

"Yes, there is a will," answered old Coney. "Miss Lewis holds the will. Will you get it, my dear?"

Anne unlocked the desk on the side-table, and put the will into Mr. Coney's hand. Without saying with your leave, or by your leave, he broke the seals, and clapped on his spectacles.

"What's *that?*" asked Mrs. Lewis, from her seat on the sofa.

"Dr. Lewis's will, ma'am. Made in France."

"My dear, sweet creature, it is so much waste paper," spoke Mrs. Lewis, smiling sweetly upon Anne. "My deeply-lamented husband's last will and testament was made long since he left France."

Pulling up the sofa pillow at her elbow, she produced another will, and asked the lawyer if he would be good enough to unseal and read it. It had been made, as the date proved, at Cheltenham, the day after she and Dr. Lewis were married; and it left every earthly thing he possessed to "his dear wife, Louisa Jane Lewis."

Old Coney's face was a picture. He stared at the will in his hands, at the one just read by the lawyer. Anne stood meekly by his side, looking as if she did not understand matters.

"*That* can't stand good!" spoke the farmer. "The money can't go to you, ma'am"—turning his burly form about to face Mrs. Lewis, and treading on my toes as he did it. "The money is this young lady's: part of it comes from her own mother: it can't be yours. Thomas Lewis must have signed the will in his sleep."

"Does a daughter inherit before a wife, dear sir?" cried Mrs. Lewis in a voice soft as butter. "It is the most just will my revered husband could have made. I *need* the money! I cannot keep on the house without it. Anne does not need it: she has no house to keep."

"Look here," says old Coney, buttoning his coat and looking fiercely at all the lot. "It's not my wish to be rude to-day, remembering what place we came straight here from; but if you don't want to be put down as—as schemers, you will lose not an hour in making over the half of that income to Anne Lewis. It is what she proposed to do by *you*, madam, when she thought all was left to her," he added, brushing past Mrs. Lewis. "Come along, Johnny."

II.

The time went on. Mrs. Lewis gave notice to leave the house at midsummer: but she had it on her hands until then, and told people she should die of its dullness. So far as could be known, she had little, if any, income, save that which she inherited from Dr. Lewis.

Anne's days did not pass in clover. Treated as of no account, she was made fully to understand that she was only tolerated in what was once her own home; and she had to make herself useful in it from morning till night, just like a servant. Remembering what had been, and what was, Anne felt heartbroken, submitting patiently; but a reaction set in, and her spirit rose in rebellion.

"Is there any remedy, I wonder?" she asked herself one night in her little chamber, when preparing for bed, and the day had been a particularly trying day. She had ventured to ask for a few shillings for some purpose or other, and was told she could not have them: being Easter Monday, Sally had a holiday, and she had been kept at work like a slave in the girl's place: Herbert Tanerton and his wife had come to invite her for a day or two to Timberdale, and a denial was returned to them without herself being consulted, or even allowed to see them. Yes, it had been a trying day. And in France Easter had always been kept as a fête.

"Is there not a remedy?" she debated, as she slowly undressed. "I have no home but this; but—could I not find one?"

She knew that she had no means of living save by her own exertions; she had not even a rag to wear or a coin to spend, save what should come to her by Mrs. Lewis's bounty. And, whether that lady possessed bounty or not, she seemed never to possess ready money. It appeared to Anne that she had been hardly dealt by in more ways than one; that the world was full of nothing but injustice.

"And I fancy," added Anne, thinking out her thoughts, "that they will be glad to get rid of me; that they want me gone."

With morning light, she was up, and busy. It fell to her lot to pre-

pare the breakfast: and she must not keep the ladies waiting for it one minute. This morning, however, she had to keep them waiting, but not through any fault of hers.

They grew impatient. Five minutes past nine: ten minutes past nine: what did Anne mean? Julia and Fanny were not much better dressed than when they got out of bed; old jackets on, rough and rumpled hair stuck up with hair pins. In that respect they presented a marked contrast to Anne, who was ever trim and nice.

"I'm sure she must be growing the coffee-berries!" cried Fanny, as she flung the door open. "*Is* that breakfast coming to-day, or to-morrow?"

"In two minutes," called back Anne.

"Oh, what a dreary life it is, out here!" groaned Mrs. Lewis. "Girls, I think we will go over to Worcester to-day, and arrange to stay a week at Lake's. And then you can go to the subscription ball at the Town Hall, that you are so wild over."

"Oh, do," cried Julia. "If I don't go to that ball, I shall die."

"I shall run away if we don't; I have said all along I would not miss the Easter ball," spoke Fanny. "Mamma, I cannot *think* why you don't shut this miserable house up!"

"Will you find the rent for another?" coolly asked Mrs. Lewis. "What *can* that girl be at with the coffee?"

It came in at last; and Anne was railed at for her laziness. When she could get a word in, she explained that Sally had had an accident with the tea-kettle, and fresh water had to be boiled.

More indignation: Julia's egg turned out to be bad. What business had Anne to boil bad eggs? Anne took it away, boiled another, and brought it in. Then Mrs. Lewis fancied she could eat a thin bit of toasted bacon; and Anne must go and do it at the end of a fork. Altogether the breakfast was nearly at an end before she could sit down at a corner of the table and eat her own bread and butter.

"I have been thinking," she began, in a hesitating tone to Mrs. Lewis, "that I should like to go out. If you have no objection. Into some situation."

Mrs. Lewis, in the act of conveying a piece of bacon to her mouth, held it suspended in mid air, and stared at Anne in amazement.

"Into *what?*"

"A situation in some gentleman's family. I have no prospect before me; no home; I must earn my own living."

"The girl's daft!" cried Mrs. Lewis, resuming her breakfast. "No home! Why, you have a home here; your proper home. Was it not your father's?"

"Yes. But it is not mine."

"It is yours; and your days in it are spent usefully. What more

would you have? Hold your tongue. If you have finished your breakfast you can begin to take the things away."

"Mamma, why don't you let her go?" whispered Fanny, as Anne went out with the first lot of plates.

"Because she is useful to me," said Mrs. Lewis. "Who else is there to see to our comforts? We should be badly off with that incapable Sally. And who would do all the needle-work? Recollect what she gets through. No, as long as we are here, Anne must stay with us. Besides, the neighbourhood would have its say finely if we let her turn out. People talk, as it is, about the will, and are not so friendly as they might be. As if they would like to fly in the face of my dear departed husband's wishes, and tacitly reproach his judgment!"

But Anne did not give up. While folding up the table-cloth, she again spoke.

"And, pray, what situation do you suppose you could take?" ironically asked Mrs. Lewis. "You are not fitted to fill one in a gentleman's family."

"Unless it be as cook-maid," put in Julia.

"Or seamstress," said Fanny. "By the way, I want some more cuffs made, Anne."

"I should like to try for a situation, notwithstanding my deficiencies. I could do something or other."

"There, that's enough; don't talk nonsense," retorted Mrs. Lewis. "And now you must come upstairs and see to my things, and to Julia's and Fanny's. We are going to Worcester by the half-past eleven train—and you may expect us home to tea when you see us."

They went off. It was pleasant Easter weather, then. Anne sat down to unpick and turn a gown of Mrs. Lewis's.

"Don't you think I might be a nursery governess, Johnny?" she asked me, while telling me of her troubles that same morning as she sat at work. "I might teach French and English and German: and I am very fond of little children. The difficulty will be to get an introduction. I have thought of one person who might give it me—if I could only dare to ask him."

"Who's that?"

"Sir Robert Tenby. He is of the great world, and must know everybody in it. And he has always shown himself so very sociable and kind. Do you think I might venture to apply to him?"

"Why not? He could not eat you for it."

But, all that day, Anne remained in a state of shilly-shally, not able to make up her mind. It was impossible to know how Sir Robert Tenby might take it.

"I have made you a drop of coffee and a bit of hot toast and

butter, Miss Anne," said Sally, coming in with a small tray. "Buttered it well. She's not here to see it."

Anne laughed, and thanked her; Mrs. Lewis had left them only cold bacon for dinner, and ordered them to wait tea until her return. Presently she and the girls came in.

"How soon you are back!" involuntarily cried Anne, hoping Mrs. Lewis would not smell the coffee. "And how are they all at Lake's?"

Mrs. Lewis answered by giving a snappish word to Lake's, and ordered Anne to get tea ready. Fanny whispered the information that they were going to Worcester on the morrow to stay over the Easter ball; but *not to Lake's.*

It appeared that upon arriving at Lake's that morning, Miss Dinah received them very coolly; and was, as Mrs. Lewis remarked afterwards, barely civil. The fact was, Miss Dinah, being just-minded, took up Anne's cause rather warmly: and did not scruple to think that the beguiling poor weak-minded Dr. Lewis out of the will he made, was just a piece of iniquity, and nothing less. She refused to take them in for the ball, saying there was no room, and stuck to it. Upon that, Mrs. Lewis went about the house, looking for Mrs. Lake, and did not find her. She, not as strong minded as Miss Dinah, had bolted herself into the best bedroom, just then unoccupied. So Mrs. Lewis, not to be baffled as to the ball, went out to seek for other lodgings, and found them in the Foregate Street.

"But we shall be home on Saturday," she said to Anne, as they were starting this second time for Worcester, on the Wednesday morning, the finery for the ball behind them in two huge trunks. "I have to pay a great deal for the rooms, and can't afford to stay longer than that. And mind that you and Sally get the house thoroughly cleaned while we are away: and get on as quickly as you can with the needle-work."

"Why, my dear young lassie, I can't help you in such a thing as this. You had better see the master himself."

Anne had lost no time. Leaving Sally to the cleaning, she dressed herself and walked over on the Wednesday afternoon to Bellwood, Sir Robert Tenby's seat. She explained her business to Mrs. Macbean, the old family housekeeper, and asked whether she could help her into any good family.

"Nae, nae, child. I live down here, and I know nothing of the gentlefolks in the great world. The master knows 'em all."

"I did think once of asking if I might see Sir Robert; but my courage fails me now," said Anne.

"And why should it?" returned the old lady. "If there's one man more ready than another to do a kindness, or more sociable to

speak with, it's Sir Robert Tenby. He takes after his mother for that, my late dear lady; not after his father. Sir George was a bit proud. I'll go and tell Sir Robert what you want."

Sir Robert was in his favourite room; a small one with a bright fire in it, its purple chairs and curtains bordered with gold. It was bright altogether, Anne thought as she entered. The windows looked on a green velvet lawn, dotted with beds of early flowers, and thence to the park: and beyond all, to the chain of the Malvern hills, rising against the blue sky. The baronet sat near one of the windows, some books on a small table at his elbow. He came forward to shake hands with Anne, and gave her a chair opposite his own. And, what with his good homely face and its smile of welcome, and his sociable, unpretending words, Anne felt at home at once.

In her own quiet way, so essentially that of a lady in its unaffected truth, she told him what she wanted. To find a home in some good family, who would be kind to her in return for her services, and pay her as much as would serve to buy her gowns and bonnets. Sir Robert Tenby, no stranger to the gossip rife in the neighbourhood, had heard of the unjust will, and of Anne's treatment from the new wife.

"It is, I imagine, impossible for a young lady to get into a good family without an introduction," said Anne. "And I thought—perhaps—you might speak for me, sir: you do know a little of me. I have no one else to recommend me."

He did not answer for the moment: he sat looking at her. Anne blushed, and went on, hoping she was not offending him.

"No one else, I mean, who is of the same degree, and mixes habitually with the great world. I should not care to take service in an inferior family: my poor father would not have liked it."

"Take service," said he, repeating the word. "It is as governess that you wish to go out?"

"As nursery governess, I thought. I may not aspire to any better position, for I know nothing of accomplishments. But little children need to be taught French and German; I could do that."

"You speak French well, of course."

"As a native. German also. And I think I speak good English, and could teach it. And oh, sir, if you did chance to know of any family who would engage me, I should be so grateful to you."

"French, English, and German," said he smiling. "Well, I can't tell what the great world, as you put it, may call accomplishments; but I should think those three enough for anybody."

Anne smiled too. "They are only languages, Sir Robert. They are not music and drawing. Had my dear mamma suspected I should have to earn my own living, she would have had me educated for it."

"I think it is a very hard thing that you should have to earn it," spoke Sir Robert.

Anne glanced up through her wet eye-lashes : reminiscences of her mother always brought tears. "There's no help for it, sir. I have not a shilling in the world."

"And no home but one that you are ill-treated in—made to do the work of a servant? Is it not so?"

Anne coloured painfully. How did he know this? Generous to Mrs. Lewis in spite of all, she did not care to speak of it herself.

"And if people did not think me clever enough to teach,," she went on, passing over his question, "I might perhaps go out to be useful in other ways. I can make French cakes and show a cook how to make nice French dishes; and I can read aloud well, and do all kinds of needlework. Some old lady, who has no children of her own, might be glad to have me."

"I think many an old lady would," said he. The remark put her in spirits. She grew animated.

"Oh, do you! I am so glad. If you should know of one, sir, would you please to tell her of me?"

Sir Robert nodded, and Anne rose to leave. He rose also.

"If I could be so fortunate as to get into such a home as this, I should be quite happy," she said in the simplicity of her heart. "How pleasant this room is!—and how beautiful it is outside!"—pausing a moment to look at the lawn and the flowers, as they stood together before the window.

"Do you know Bellwood? Were you ever here before?"

"No, sir, never."

Sir Robert put on his hat and went out with her, showing her some pretty spots about the grounds. Anne was enchanted, especially with the rocks and the cascades. Versailles, she thought, could not be better than Bellwood.

"And when you hear of anything, sir, you will please to let me know?"

"Yes. You had better come again soon. This is Wednesday: suppose you call on Friday. Will you?"

"Oh, I shall be only too glad. I will be sure to come. Good-bye, Sir Robert: and thank you very, very much."

She went home with light heels and a lighter heart: she had not felt so happy since her father died.

"How good he is! how kind! a true gentleman," she thought. "And what a good thing he fixed Friday instead of Saturday, for on Saturday they will be at home. But it is hardly possible that he will have heard of any place, unless he has one in his eye."

It was rather late on Friday afternoon before Anne could get to Bellwood. She asked, as before, for Mrs. Macbean, not presuming to ask direct for Sir Robert Tenby. Sir Robert was out, but was expected every minute, and Anne waited in Mrs. Macbean's parlour.

"Do you think he has heard of anything for me?" was one of the first questions she put.

"Eh, my dear, and how should I know?" was the old lady's reply. "He does not tell me of his affairs. Not but what he talks to me a good deal, and always like a friend: he does not forget that my late leddy, his mother, made more of a friend of me than a servant. Many's the half hour he keeps me talking in his parlour; and always bids me take the easiest seat there. I wish he would marry!"

"Do you," replied Anne, mechanically: for she was thinking more of her own concerns than Sir Robert's.

"Why, yes, that I do. It's a lonely life for him at best, the one he leads. I've not scrupled to tell him, times and oft, that he ought to bring a mistress home.——Eh, but there he is! That's his step."

As before, Anne went into the pretty room that Sir Robert, when alone, mostly sat in. Three or four opened letters lay upon the table, and she wondered whether they related to her.

"No, I have as yet no news for you," he said, smiling at her eager face, and keeping her hand in his while he spoke. "You will have to come again for it. Sit down."

"But if—if you have nothing to tell me to-day, I had better not take up your time," said Anne, not liking to appear intrusive.

"My time! If you knew how slowly time some days seems to pass for me, you would have no scruple about 'taking it up.' Sit here. This is a pleasant seat."

With her eyes fixed on the outer landscape, Anne sat on and listened to him. He talked of various things, and she felt as much at her ease (as she told me that same evening) as though she had been talking with me. She felt half afraid she had been too open, for she told him all about her childhood's home in France and her dear mother. It was growing dusk when she got up to go.

"Will you come again on Monday afternoon?" he asked. "I shall be out in the morning."

"If I can, sir. Oh, yes, if I can. But Mrs. Lewis, who will be at home then, does not want me to take a situation at all, and she may not let me come out."

"I should come without telling her," smiled Sir Robert. "Not want you to leave home, eh? Would like you to stay there to make the puddings? Ay, I understand. Well, I shall expect you on Monday. There may be some news, you know."

And, somehow, Anne took up the notion that there would be news, his tone sounded so hopeful. All the way home her feet seemed to tread on air.

On the Sunday evening when they were all sitting together at Maythorn Bank, and Anne had no particular duty on hand, she took courage to tell of what she had done, and that Sir Robert Tenby was

so good as to interest himself for her. Mrs. Lewis was indignant; the young ladies were pleasantly satirical.

"As nursery governess: you!" mocked Miss Julia. "What shall you teach your pupils? To play at cats' cradle?"

"Why, you know, Anne, you are not *fit* for a governess," said Fanny. "It would be quite *wicked* of you to make believe to be one."

"You had better go to school yourself first," snapped Mrs. Lewis. "I will not allow you to take any such step: so put all thought of it out of your head."

Anne leaned her perplexed and aching brow upon her hand. Was she so unfit? Would it be wicked? She determined to put the case fully before her kind friend, Sir Robert Tenby, and ask his opinion.

Providing that she could get to Sir Robert's. Ask leave to go, she dare not; for she knew the answer would be a point-blank refusal.

But fortune favoured her. Between three and four o'clock on Monday afternoon, Mrs. Lewis and her daughters dressed themselves and sailed away to call on some people at South Crabb; which lay in just the contrary direction to Bellwood. They left Anne a heap of sewing to do: but she left the sewing and went out on her own score. I met her near the Ravine. She told me what she had done, and looked bright and flushed over it.

"Mrs. Lewis is one cat, and they are two other cats, Anne. Tod says so. Good-bye. Good luck to you!"

"Eh, my dear, and I was beginning to think you didna mean to come," was Mrs. Macbean's salutation. "But Sir Robert is nae back yet; he has been out on horseback since the morning; and he said you were to wait for him. So just take your bonnet off, and you shall have a cup of tea with me!"

Nothing loth, Anne took off her out-of-door things. "They will be home before I am, and find me gone out," she reflected; "but they can't quite kill me for it." The old lady rang her bell for tea, and thought what a nice and pretty lady Anne looked in her plain black dress with its white neck-frill, and the handsome jet necklace that had been her mother's.

But before the tea could be made, Sir Robert Tenby's horse trotted up, and they heard him go to his sitting-room. Mrs. Macbean took Anne into his presence, saying at the same time that she had been about to give the young lady a cup of tea.

"I should like some tea too," said Sir Robert. "Send it in."

It came in upon a waiter, and was placed upon the table. Anne, at his request, put sugar and cream into his cup, handed it to him, and then took her own. He was looking very thoughtful; she seemed to fancy he had no good news for her; and her heart went down, down. In a very timid tone, she told him of the depreciating

opinion held of her talents at home, and begged him to say what *he* thought, for she would not like to be guilty of undertaking any duty she was not fully competent to fulfil.

"Will you take some more tea?" was all Sir Robert said in answer.

"No, thank you, sir."

"Another biscuit? No? We will send the tray away then."

Ringing the bell, a servant came in and took the things. Sir Robert, standing at the window then, and looking down at Anne as she sat, began to speak.

"I think there might be more difficulty in getting you a situation as governess than we thought for: one that would be quite suitable, at least. Perhaps another kind of situation would do better for you."

Her whole face, turned up to him with its gaze of expectancy, changed to sadness; the light in her eyes died away. It seemed so like the knell of all her hopes. Sir Robert only smiled.

"If you could bring yourself to take it—and to like it," he continued.

"But what situation is it, sir?"

"That of my wife. That of lady of Bellwood."

Just for a moment or two she simply stared at him. When his meaning reached her comprehension, her face turned red and white with emotion. Sir Robert took her hand and spoke more fully. He had learnt to like her very, very much, to esteem her, and he wished her to be his wife.

"I am aware that there is a good deal of difference in our ages, my dear; more than twenty years," he went on, while she sat in silence. "But I think you might find happiness with me; I will do my very best to ensure it. Better be my wife than a nursery governess. What do you say?"

"Oh, sir, I do not know what to say," she answered, trembling a little. "It is so unexpected—and a great honour—and—and I am overwhelmed."

"Could you like me?" he gently asked.

"I do like you, sir; very much. But this—this would be different. Perhaps you would let me take until to-morrow to think about it?"

"Of course I will. Bring me your answer then. Bring it yourself, whatever it may be."

"I will, sir. And I thank you very greatly."

All night long Anne Lewis lay awake. Should she take this good man for her husband, or should she not? She did like him very much; and what a position it would be for her; and how sheltered she would be henceforth from the frowns of the world! Anne might never have hesitated, but for the remains of her love for Mr. Angerstyne. That was passing away from her heart day by day, as she

knew; it would soon have quite passed. She could never feel that same love again; it was over and done with for ever; but there was surely no reason why she should sacrifice all her future to it. *Yes:* she would accept Sir Robert Tenby: and would make him a true, faithful, good wife.

It was nearly dusk the next afternoon before she could leave the house. Mrs. Lewis had kept her in sight so long that she feared she might not get the opportunity that day. She ran all the way to Bellwood, anxious to keep her promise: she could not bear to seem to trifle, even for a moment, with this good and considerate man. Sir Robert was waiting for her in a glow of fire-light. He came forward, took both her hands in his, and looked into her face enquiringly.

"Well?"

"Yes, sir, if you still wish to take me. I will try to be to you a loving and obedient wife."

With a sigh of relief, he sat down on a sofa that was drawn to the fire and placed her beside him, holding her hand still.

"My dear, I thank you: you have made me very happy. You shall *never* have cause to repent it."

"It is so strange," she whispered, "that you should wait all these years, with the world to choose from, and then think of *me* at last! I can scarcely believe it."

"Ay, I suppose it is strange. But I must tell you something, Anne. When quite a young man, there was a young lady whom I dearly loved. She was poor, and not of much family, and my father forbade the union. She married some one else, and died. It is for the love of her I have kept single all these years. But I shall not make you the less good husband."

"And I—I wish to tell you—that *I* once cared for some one," whispered Anne in her straightforward honesty. "It is all over and done with; but I did like him very much."

"Then, my dear, we shall be even," he said, with a merry smile. "The one cannot reproach the other. And now—this is the beginning of April: before the month shall have closed you had better come to me. We have nothing to wait for; and I do not like, now that you belong to me, to leave you one moment longer than is needful with that lady whom you are forced to call step-mother."

How Anne got home that late afternoon she hardly knew: she knew still less how to bring the news out. In the course of the following morning she tried at it, and made a bungle of it.

"Sir Robert not going to get you a situation as governess!" interrupted Julia, before Anne had half finished. "Of course he is not. He knows you are not capable of taking one. *I* thought how much he was intending to help you. You must have had plenty of *cheek*, Anne, to trouble him."

"I am going to be his wife instead," said poor Anne meekly. "He has asked me to be. And—and it is to be very soon; and he is coming to see Mrs. Lewis this morning."

Mrs. Lewis, sitting back in an easy chair, her feet on the fender, dropped the book she was reading, to stare at Anne. Julia burst into a laugh of incredulity. Her mother spoke.

"You poor infatuated girl! This comes of being brought up on French soup. But Sir Robert Tenby has no right to play jokes upon you. I shall write and tell him so."

"I—think—he is there," stammered Anne.

"There he was. A handsome carriage was drawing up to the gate, bearing the baronet's badge upon its panels. Sir Robert sat inside. A footman came up the path and thundered at the door.

Not very long afterwards; it was in the month of June; Anne and her husband were guests at a London crush in Berkeley Square. It was too crowded to be pleasant. Anne began to look tired, and Sir Robert whispered to her that if she had had enough of it, they would go home. "Very gladly," she answered, and turned to say good-night to her hostess.

"Anne! How are you?"

The unexpected interruption, in a voice she knew quite well, and which sent a thrill through her, even yet, pulled Anne up in her course. There stood Henry Angerstyne, his hand held out in greeting, a confident smile, as if assuming she could only receive him joyfully, on his handsome face.

"I am so much surprised to see you here; so delighted to meet you once again, Miss Lewis."

"You mistake, sir," replied Anne, in a cold, proud tone, drawing her head a little up. "I am Lady Tenby."

Walking forward, she put her arm within her husband's, who waited for her. Mr. Angerstyne understood it at once: it needed not the almost bridal robes of white silk and lace to enlighten him. She was not altered. She looked just the same single-minded, honest-hearted girl as ever, with a pleasant word for all—save just in the moment when she had spoken to him.

"I am glad of it: she deserves her good fortune," he thought heartily. With all his faults, few men could be more generously just than Henry Angerstyne.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

AT RAVENHOLME JUNCTION.

"WERE you ever out in a more wretched night in your life?" asked Harry Luscombe in a tone of disgust, as we were trudging wearily along after a full half-hour of absolute silence.

The rain was certainly coming down "with a vengeance," as people say. We had been out all day fishing in some private waters about ten miles from home. A friend had given us a lift in his trap the greater part of the way in going, and we had arranged to walk back, never dreaming that the sunny day would resolve itself into so wet an evening. Fortunately, each of us had taken a light mackintosh, and we had on our thick fishing-boots, otherwise our plight would have been much worse than it was.

"Wretched night!" again ejaculated Harry, whose pipe the rain would persist in putting out.

"But surely we cannot be far from the Grange now?" I groaned.

"A good four miles yet, old fellow," answered my friend. "We must grin and bear it."

For ten more minutes we paced the slushy road in moist silence.

"I wouldn't have cared so much," growled Harry at last, "if we had only a decent lot of fish to take home. Won't Gerty and the governor chaff us in the morning!"

I winced. Harry had touched a sore point. I rather prided myself on my prowess with rod and line; yet here was I, after eight hours' patient flogging of the water, going back to the Grange with a creel that I should blush to open when I got there. It was most annoying.

By-and-by we came to a stile, crossing which we found a footpath through the meadows, just faintly visible in the dark. The footpath, in time, brought us to a level crossing over the railway. But instead of crossing the iron road to the fields beyond, as I expected he would do, Harry turned half round and began to walk along the line. "Where on earth are you leading me to?" I asked, as I stumbled and barked my shins over a heap of loose sleepers by the side of the rails, "Seest thou not yonder planets that flame so brightly in the midnight sky?" he exclaimed, pointing to two railway signals clearly visible some quarter of a mile away. "Thither are we bound. Disturb not the meditations of a great mind by further foolish questionings."

I was too damp to retort as I might otherwise have done, so I held my peace and stumbled quietly after him. Little by little we drew nearer to the signal lamps, till at last we stood close under them. They

shone far and high above our heads, being, in fact, the crowning points of two tall semaphore posts. But we were not going quite so far skyward as the lamps, our destination being the signalman's wooden hut from which the semaphores were worked. This of itself stood some distance above the ground, being built on substantial posts driven firmly into the embankment. It was reached by a flight of wooden steps, steep and narrow. We saw by the light shining from its windows that it was not without an occupant. Harry put a couple of fingers to his mouth and whistled shrilly. "Jim Crump," he shouted, "Jim Crump—hi! Where are you?"

"Is that you, Mr. Harry?" said a voice, and then the door above us was opened. "Wait a moment, sir, till I get my lantern. The steps are slippery with the rain, and one of them is broken."

"You see, my governor is one of the managing directors of this line," said Harry, in explanation, while we were waiting for the lantern, "so that I can come and go, and do pretty much as I like about here."

"But why have you come here at all?" I asked.

"For the sake of a rest and a smoke, and a talk with Jim Crump about his dogs."

Two minutes later and we had mounted the steps, and for the first time in my life I found myself in a signalman's box.

It was a snug little place enough, but there was not much room to spare. There were windows on three sides it, so that the man on duty might have a clear view both up and down the line. Five or six long iron levers were fixed in a row below the front window. The due and proper manipulation of these levers, which were connected by means of rods and chains with the points and signals outside, and the working of the simple telegraphic apparatus which placed him en rapport with the stations nearest to him, up and down, were the signalman's sole but onerous duties. Both the box and the lamps overhead were lighted with gas brought from the town, two miles away.

"I have been wanting to see you for the last two or three weeks, Mr. Harry," said Crump, a well-built man of thirty, with clear resolute eyes and a firm-set mouth.

"Ay, ay. What's the game now, Crump? Got some more of that famous tobacco?"

"Something better than the tobacco, Mr. Harry. I've got a bull terrier pup for you. Such a beauty!"

"The dickens you have!" cried Harry, his eyes all a-sparkle with delight. "Crump, you are a brick. A bull terrier pup is the very thing I've been hankering after for the last three months. Have you got it here?"

"No, it's at home. You see, I didn't know that you were coming to-night."

Harry's countenance fell. "That's a pity now, isn't it?"

"It don't rain near so fast as it did," said Crump, "and if you would like to take the pup with you, I'll just run home and fetch it. I can go there and back in twenty minutes. It's agen the rules to leave my box, I know, and I wouldn't leave it for anybody but you; and not even for you, Mr. Harry, if I didn't know that you knew how to work the levers and the telly a'most as well as I do myself. Besides all that, there will be nothing either up or down till twelve thirty. What say you, sir?"

"I say go by all means, Crump. You may depend on my looking well after the signals while you are away."

"Right you are, sir." And Crump proceeded to pull on his overcoat.

"I wish I could make you more comfortable, sir," said Crump to me. "But this is only a roughish place."

Harry and I sat down on a sort of bunk or locker at the back of the box. Harry produced his flask, which he had filled with brandy before leaving the hotel. Crump declined any of the proffered spirit, but accepted a cigar. Then he pulled up the collar of his coat and went. In the pauses of our talk we could hear the moaning of the telegraph wires outside as the invisible fingers of the wind touched them in passing.

"This is Ravenholme Junction," said Harry to me.

"Is it, indeed? Much obliged for the information," I answered drily.

"About two years ago a terrible accident happened close to this spot. No doubt you read about it at the time."

"Possibly so. But if I did, the facts have escaped my memory."

"The news was brought to the Grange, and I was on the spot in less than three hours after the smash. I shall never forget what I saw that night." He smoked in grave silence for a little while, and then he spoke again. "I don't know whether you are acquainted with the railway geography of this district, but Ravenholme—I am speaking of the village, which is nearly two miles away—is on a branch line, which diverges from the main line some six miles north of this box, and after zigzagging among various busy townships and hamlets, joins the main line again about a dozen miles south of the point where it diverged; thus forming what is known as the Ravenholme Loop Line. None of the main line trains run over the loop: Passengers from it going to any place on the main line have to change from the local trains at either the north or south junction, according to the direction they intend to travel."

I wondered why he was telling this.

"You will understand from this that the junction where we are now is rather an out-of-the-way spot—out of the way, that is, of any great

A. C. H. LUXMOORE.

J. SWAIN

bustle of railway traffic. It forms, in fact, the point of connection between the Ravenholme Loop and a single line of rails which turns off to the left about a hundred yards from here, and gives access to a cluster of important collieries belonging to Lord Exbrooke; and the duty of Crump is, by means of his signals, to guard against the possibility of a collision between the coal trains coming off the colliery line and the ordinary trains passing up and down the loop. You will readily comprehend that, at a quiet place like this, a signalman has not half the work to do, nor half the responsibility to labour under, of a man in a similar position at some busy junction on the main line. In fact, a signalman at Ravenholme Junction may emphatically be said to have an easy time of it."

I nodded.

"Some two years ago, however, it so fell out that an abutment of one of the bridges on the main line was so undermined by heavy floods that instructions had to be given for no more trains to pass over it till it had been thoroughly repaired. In order to prevent any interruption of traffic, it was decided that till the necessary repairs could be effected all main line trains should work, for the time being, over the Ravenholme Loop. As it was arranged so it was carried out."

"Well?"

"The signalman at that time in charge of this box was named Dazeley—a shy, nervous sort of man, as I have been told, lacking in self-confidence, and not to be depended upon in any unforeseen emergency. Such as he was, however, he had been at Ravenholme for three years, and had always performed the duties of his situation faithfully and well. As soon as the main line trains began to travel by the new route, another man was sent from head-quarters to assist Dazeley—there had been no night-work previously. The men came on duty turn and turn about, twelve hours on and twelve hours off, the man who was on by day one week being on by night the following week."

"Go on."

"It is said that Dazeley soon began to look worn and depressed, and that he became more nervous and wanting in self-confidence than ever. Be that as it may, he never spoke a complaining word to anyone, but went on doing his duty in the silent depressed way habitual with him. One morning when he was coming off duty—it was his turn for night-work that week—his mate was taken suddenly ill and was obliged to go home again. There was no help for it: Dazeley was obliged to take the sick man's place for the day. When evening came round, his mate sent word that he was somewhat better, but not well enough to resume work before morning; so Dazeley had to take his third consecutive 'spell' of twelve hours in the box. You see, Ravenholme is a long way from head-quarters, and in any case it would have taken some time to get assistance; besides which, Dazeley expected

that a few hours at the very most would see his mate thoroughly recovered. So nothing was said or done."

I was growing interested.

"The night mail from south to north was timed to pass Ravenholme Junction, without stopping, at 11.40. On the particular night to which we now come—the night of the accident—it is supposed that poor Dazeley, utterly worn out for want of rest, had lain down for a minute or two on this very bunk, and had there dropped off to sleep, his signals, as was usual at that hour, standing at "all clear." Had he remained asleep till after the mail had passed all would have been well, everything being clear for its safe transit past the junction; but unfortunately the night was somewhat foggy, and the engine-driver, not being able to see the lamps at the usual distance, blew his whistle loudly. Roused by the shrill summons, Dazeley, as it is supposed, started suddenly to his feet, and his brain being still muddled with sleep, he grasped one of the familiar levers, and all unconscious of what he was doing, he turned the mail train on to the single line that led to the collieries."

"Oh!"

"The consequences were terrible. Some two or three hundred yards down the colliery line a long coal train was waiting for the mail to pass before proceeding on its journey. Into this train the mail dashed at headlong speed. Two people were killed on the spot, and twenty or thirty more or less hurt."

"How dreadful!"

"When they came to look for Dazeley he was not to be found. Horror-stricken at the terrible consequences of his act, he had fled. A warrant for his arrest was obtained. He was found four days afterwards in a wood, hanging to the bough of a tree, dead. One of his hands clasped a scrap of paper on which a few half-illegible words had been scrawled, the purport of which was that after what had happened he could no longer bear to live."

"A sad story, truly," I said, as Harry finished. "It seems to me that the poor fellow was to be pitied more than blamed."

"Crump's twenty minutes are rather long ones," said Harry, as he looked at his watch. "It is now thirty-eight minutes past eleven. No chance of getting home till long after midnight."

The rain was over and the wind had gone with it. Not a sound was audible save now and again the faint moaning of the telegraph wires overhead. Harry crossed to the window and opened one of the three casements. "A breath of fresh air will be welcome," he said. "The gas makes this little place unbearable." Having opened the window he came back again and sat down beside me on the bunk.

Hardly had Harry resumed his seat, when all at once the gas sank down as though it were going out, but next moment it was burning

as brightly as before. An icy shiver ran through me from head to foot. I turned my head to glance at Harry, and as I did so I saw, to my horror, that we were no longer alone. There had been but two of us only a moment before: the door had not been opened, yet now we were three. Sitting on a low wooden chair close to the levers, and with his head resting on them, was a stranger, to all appearance fast asleep!

I never before experienced the feeling of awful dread that crept over me at that moment, and I hope never to do so again. I knew instinctively that the figure before me was no corporeal being, no creature of flesh and blood like ourselves. My heart seemed to contract, my blood to congeal: my hands and feet turned cold as ice: the roots of my hair were stirred with a creeping horror that I had no power to control. I could not move my eyes from that sleeping figure. It was Dazeley come back again: a worn, haggard-looking man, restless, and full of nervous twitchings even in his sleep.

"Listen!" said Harry, almost inaudibly, to me. I wanted to look at him, I wanted to see whether he was affected in the same way that I was, but for the life of me I could not turn my eyes away from that sleeping phantom.

Listening as he bade me, I could just distinguish the first low dull murmur made by an on-coming train while it is still a mile or more away. It was a murmur that grew and deepened with every second, swelling gradually into the hoarse inarticulate roar of an express train coming towards us at full speed. Suddenly the whistle sounded its loud, shrill, imperative summons. For one moment I tore my eyes away from the sleeping figure. Yonder, a quarter, or it might be half a mile away, but being borne towards us in a wild rush of headlong fury, was plainly visible the glowing Cyclopean eye of the coming train. Still the whistle sounded, painful, intense—agonised, one might almost fancy.

Louder and louder grew the heavy thunderous beat of the train. It was close upon us now. Suddenly the sleeping figure started to its feet—pressed its hands to its head for a moment as though lost in doubt—gave one wild, frenzied glance round—and then seizing one of the levers with both hands, pulled it back and there held it.

A sudden flash—a louder roar—and the phantom train had passed us and was plunging headlong into the darkness beyond. The figure let go its hold of the lever, which fell back to its original position. As it did so, a dreadful knowledge seemed all at once to dawn on its face. Surprise, horror, anguish unspeakable—all were plainly depicted on the white, drawn features of the phantom before me. Suddenly it flung up its arms as if in wild appeal to Heaven, then sank coweringly on its knees, and buried its face in both its hands with an expression of misery the most profound.

Next moment the gas gave a flicker as though it were going out, and

when I looked again Harry and I were alone. The phantom of the unhappy signalman had vanished: the noise of the phantom train had faded into silence. No sound was audible save the unceasing monotone of the electric wires above us. Harry was the first to break the spell.

"To-day is the eighth of September," he said, "and it was on the eighth of September, two years ago, that the accident happened. I had forgotten the date till this moment."

At this instant the door opened, and in came Jim Crump with the puppy under his arm. Struck with something in our faces he looked from one to the other of us, and did not speak for a few seconds. "Here be the pup, sir," he said at last, "and a reg'lar little beauty I call her."

"Was it not two years ago this very night that the accident took place?" asked Harry, as he took the puppy out of Crump's arms into his own.

Crump reflected for a few moments. "Yes, sir, that it was, though I'd forgotten it. It was on the eighth of September. I ought to know, because it was on that very night my youngster was born."

"Were you signalman here on the eighth of September last year—the year after the accident?"

"No, sir, a man of the name of Moffat was here then. I came on the twentieth of September. Moffat was ordered to be moved. They said he had gone a little bit queer in his head. He went about saying that Dazeley's ghost had shown itself to him in this very box, and that he saw and heard a train come past that wasn't a train, and I don't know what bosh; so it was thought best to remove him."

"We thought just now—my friend and I—that we heard a train coming," said Harry as he gently stroked the puppy. "Did you hear anything as you came along?"

"Nothing whatever, sir. Had a train been coming I must have heard it, because I walked from my house up the line. Besides, there's no train due yet for some time."

Harry glanced at me. He was evidently not minded to enlighten Crump as to anything we had seen or heard.

Five minutes later we left, carrying the dog with us. Whether or not Harry said anything to his father I don't know. This, however, I do know, that within six months from that time certain alterations were made on the line which necessitated the removal of the signalman's box at Ravenholme Junction to a point half a mile further south. But I have never visited it since that memorable night.

WHO GOES THERE?

The night creeps on, it waxes late,
The watchman stands beside the gate ;
Who goes there, in the gloom ?
A pilgrim grey, with haggard face,
And trembling hands, and feeble pace,
And limbs fast failing in the race—
The Old Year to his doom.
Alone he wanders forth to die,
Do you not hear his parting sigh ?
" Good-bye, my comrades all, good-bye ! "

Well, well, the best of friends must part,
Despite sad looks and heavy heart.
'Tis strange to ponder how
He came but twelve short months ago
Right bravely through the frost and snow ;
Then he was young and strong you know,
A conqueror ; ah, now
His heart is faint, his visage grim,
He's weak of voice, and shrunk of limb.
Farewell—a long farewell—to him.

Within, gay laughter, song and mirth ;
Without, the silent, snow-clad earth.
Who goes there—through the night ?
A shadowy crowd, a ghostly throng,
Good deeds and great, foul acts of wrong,
A sweet, dead Springtime, buried long
Mid mem'ries of delight ;
She was the year's first love, his bride,
And the fair phantom by her side
Sprang into being when she died.

So Spring departed ; Summer went ;
Brown Autumn vanished, quickly spent,
For Winter chilled him soon.
Idly we mourn ; nor grief nor tear
Will check for us the fleeting year ;
And surely, since December's here,
'Tis vain to sigh for June.
Rest, then, pale visions of the past ;
New seasons wait to follow fast,
Till time has gathered in the last.

Hark ! midnight by the castle bell ;
Speak out once more, brave sentinel—
Who goes there ? nay, he's gone.
Gone with the years before the flood,
Yet leaving issue of his blood ;
So from the blossom to the bud
Turn we. Old Year, pass on.
Pass on ;—not lightly do we rend
The tie ; nor unlamented send
You from our hearth and home, good friend !

SYDNEY GREY.

DR. MARY BUNN.

(WE meet with lady doctors nowadays. Opinions are divided as to the suitability and expediency of women taking up this profession. The early movement towards it certainly arose in America—where, as a rule, women are far more advanced in ideas than they are with us. Perhaps the readers of the ARGOSY may like to peruse one of these early histories: that of an American lady who passed for M.D. in her own country, and then set up in practice. It may also give some amusing insight into the simple and pleasant domestic life of the Americans.)

I.

The whole Harebell family was awaiting the arrival. All the children had clean pinafores and clean faces. Grandmamma had put on a fresh cap, a fresh book-muslin kerchief nicely starched, and sat in her own especial rocking-chair—her placid features lighted up by interest and expectation. Mrs. Harebell herself, in the neatest of print gowns and the whitest of collars, moved between sitting-room and kitchen; now giving a cheerful word to her mother, and anon adding some dainty to the well-spread table.

"How that kettle boils away!" she presently remarked. "If they don't come soon, we shall have to put on more water; there won't be enough left to make the tea."

Just then James—who was mounted on the outer gate, as on a tower of observation—gave a loud shout, jumped down, and came tearing to the door. They were coming now: had just turned the corner by the meeting-house.

A few minutes later, the old white horse jogged into the lane, dragging after him the mud-bespattered family vehicle; on whose narrow front seat sat Mr. Harebell and a lady. All eyes were bent on the latter with curious interest.

"There she is—that's her!" said James to his sister Malvina.

"Why, she does not look different from other people!" exclaimed Malvina, in a tone of strong disappointment.

"What did you expect?" cried the boy. "Did you think she would come riding in on a pair of saddle-bags?"

"Oh, but I mean herself," said Malvina.

Mary Bunn, a lady well reared, but who had, unfortunately, no

prospects, was persuaded by sundry adventurous friends to go in for the study of medicine. Whether she would ever have done it of her own accord, may be a question. She went steadily on in it, for she could not afford to be chopping and changing: and at length took her degree, and was Dr. Mary Bunn. She was now about to set up in practice; had chosen a strange neighbourhood for it; and, through some mutual friends, had induced the Harebells, whose house was roomy, to receive her as a boarder. Mr. Harebell had now been to meet her at the distant station—or, as they called it, depôt.

Mrs. Harebell ran forth to welcome the stranger, and to assist in carrying in her parcels.

"This is my wife, Miss Bunn," said the good man; and the ladies bowed to one another. "You take her right in, Maria," he continued, "and let her rest. The roads are dreadful, and we've had a long ride of it. Malvina, here's a bag and parasol. James, where's Aaron, that he is not here? He must help with the luggage."

"The luggage had better go upstairs at once," said Mrs. Harebell.

"If you please," added Miss Bunn, and she prepared herself to follow it.

"Nay, you are too tired to go up now," chimed in grandmamma. "Sit right down here, my dear, and take off your things. You shall have some tea directly."

"Oh, thank you," cried the tired woman, doing as she was told. And they were all soon seated round the table: not one of them but was stealing glances at the new inmate. A female doctor seemed to some of them a formidable phenomenon.

"Not great for looks," was grandma's inward verdict. "A fresh, wholesome complexion, though, and a sensible face."

Malvina's disappointment was confirmed. She had expected—she knew not what—something very different, at any rate, from the people she saw every day; and this light-haired woman, with a good deal of colour and a few freckles, was too much like ordinary people to satisfy her fancy.

"Rather a *humble* kind of face," thought Mrs. Harebell as she poured the tea and added cream and sugar—"or would be if it were not for her clear and bright complexion. I don't know, though; her eyes have got depth in them; nice grey eyes, too, they are. I guess she knows what she's about. Can't judge much of looks the first time of seeing them. Do have some more of the tongue," she said aloud; "you need something a little hearty after your journey. Pass the butter, James. Malvina, run and bring in those hot cakes, these are getting cold. Take some honey—do, Miss Bunn. You'll find it good, I know."

"I am sure it is," answered Miss Bunn in a pleasant voice; "but

see how well I am supplied already. I am afraid to add more to such a variety."

"Oh! honey never hurts anybody," said Mrs. Harebell, cutting off a liberal section, through whose translucent comb the liquid gold shone lusciously.

"You have a beautiful country here," remarked Miss Bunn.

"That depends on how you view it," said Mr. Harebell. "Good for grazing; no better dairy-land than ours the whole State through. But for tillage, I tell you, it's tough work; up one hill and down another. You'll have a chance to try it in your own line, come worse weather—and, even now, for that matter, unless we get some drying winds. Our roads here are dreadful, the mud tremendous: I don't believe you ever saw the match of it where you came from."

"You ought not to discourage Miss Bunn to begin with," put in Mrs. Harebell.

"I don't intend to be easily discouraged," observed Miss Bunn, smiling. "I expect to have to work; to work well: and I shall like it."

"That's the right sort!—you'll do!" said the farmer heartily, in his good nature. But he had his doubts. Willingness to work was an excellent thing in most cases, but in such an out-of-the-way field as Miss Bunn had chosen, would it amount to much? Would anyone give her work to do?

"Your nearest physician lives at a place called Malden, I think," she said, presently.

"Yes—Dr. Benedict. A first-rate man; everyone respects him. His sister, Miss Keturah, thinks there is no one like him in all the world!"

"She should leave it to his wife to think that," said Miss Bunn, in a pleasant kind of jesting tone.

"His wife! there is no such person!" exclaimed grandma. "Dr. Benedict is a bachelor."

James and Malvina were laughing at her mistake, and Miss Bunn felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"How came I to make such a remark?" she thought to herself. "Just like some girl whose mind runs on marriage, and such matters!"

II.

Dr. Mary Bunn was soon an established member of the Harebell household. A large room, looking to the side of the house that faced the fields, was appropriated to her use, and here were presently collected her professional and individual properties. Among these her medicine-case was most conspicuous and highest prized. She

consulted Mr. Harebell respecting the purchase of a horse. Rightly conjecturing that her rides would not yet require a powerful animal, he offered her the use of the old white steed that had fetched her from the station. A second-hand gig and set of harness was found to suit the doctor's slender purse, and the equipment was complete. Miss Bunn had only to sit down and await the summonses of her patients.

This locality was called Rudley Corners: and the country round about was not a little interested in the advent of such a phenomenon as a "woman doctor." Curiosity concerning her manners and appearance prevailed largely among the gentler sex; it was mixed, in most instances, with contempt of her pretensions and ability.

"What sort of a creature can this be, who has come to Rudley Corners, and set herself up as a medical man?" exclaimed Miss Keturah Benedict one evening to her brother: a tall, iron-grey man with earnest eyes, who sat reading at the other side of the table. That is, his hair was beginning to be iron-grey.

"I don't know," he answered, "I have never seen her." And, as a little smile crept over his face, one saw what a good and pleasant and comely face it was.

"It is not necessary to *see* her to tell; it is plain enough what she must be," retorted Miss Keturah, with energy. "A woman going out of her own sphere, in that way, to meddle with what properly belongs to a man! Why, John, it is not decent!"

"Not quite so fast, Keturah. I have always thought and said that a woman has a right to any place she can fill. If she possess the needful nerve and skill for a doctor, let her be one."

"*If* she does. Why, of course you know she cannot. A woman is a woman. But, look here, John: it is a novelty. People run after novelties and they will run after her—and she'll take your practice from you."

He smiled again. "She is quite welcome to take a slice out of it at Rudley Corners."

"Oh! Had you not better recommend her to your patients. Perhaps you mean to do it!"

"Not quite. My feeling about her is a good deal like your own. The idea of a woman in such a position is exceedingly distasteful; still, one wishes to be reasonable about it. Of course, when a woman puts herself in a man's place, she must expect to be regarded as a man would be; she must not look for the deference and consideration which are the right of the sex."

"Certainly not," said Miss Keturah, with emphasis. "She has no sort of business to dream of it for a minute."

Miss Benedict, as may be surmised, did not make one of the throng of callers, who, on one pretence or another, invaded the Harebell

dwelling. All the world was anxious to see the new inmate; and the impression she made on them varied. Some pronounced Dr. Mary Bunn a mere nobody: there was nothing showy about her, nothing striking. Others found her a quiet, pretty sort of woman, rather lady-like.

But all this curiosity and calling did not diminish Dr. Mary Bunn's stock of medicines nor enlarge her income. Ten days, a fortnight, three weeks passed, and there came no demand for her professional attendance. Meanwhile her expenses for board, and such-like, were running on. One stormy evening the doctor went to rest in a desponding frame of mind. At this rate her funds would soon be exhausted—and what then? Pondering this question, she fell asleep.

A few hours later she awoke with a start: was that some one knocking at the back of the house? She sat up in bed, and listened. Steps came along the hall and up the stairs, and a very decided tap sounded on the door of her own room.

"Dr. Bunn is wanted," called out Mr. Harebell, who had been aroused by the summons and got up to answer it.

"Yes," she answered eagerly, "I am beginning to dress myself, thank you. Who is it wants me?"

"Squire Morrison, over to Barnes," called back Mr. Harebell from beyond the door. "He is taken with an awful distress in his back and stomach, the messenger says, and they want you to come right away. But it is a tremendous night, Miss Bunn; not fit for you to venture out in. Had I not better tell the young man to ride on to Malden for Dr. Benedict?"

"Oh, no, no; don't think of it," she cried with alacrity. "I'll be down directly, Mr. Harebell. If—someone could but put the white horse in the gig?"

The someone who did it was Mr. Harebell. He did not wake up his man. By the time the steed was brought to the door, Dr. Bunn was ready in her waterproof and overshoes.

"It is raining pitchforks—and such a wind!" cried the good man. "An umbrella will be useless. I really think you ought not to go."

"Never mind," said the doctor cheerfully. "I can put up the hood of my waterproof, and the gig-apron is india-rubber. I shall get along very well. What sort of roads lie that way, Mr. Harebell?"

"Pretty rough. I hope the lamp will keep alight. You must be careful in going down into the hollow: there are plenty of rolling stones about, and the horse might lose his footing. The messenger ought to have waited to pilot you. I can't think why he didn't. I have a great mind to go with you myself."

Mary Bunn fought valiantly against the sensation of relief which this proposal gave her. "Oh! no, I couldn't think of it," she answered. "I must learn to take care of myself if I am ever to

accomplish anything. Where's the use of being a doctor if I cannot take a solitary drive at night?" she cheerily added, as she started on her way.

Dr. Bunn drove slowly down the avenue, amid the swaying and sobbing of the trees, and gained the road. Here she chirruped to old Whitey, as the horse was named, and essayed a swifter pace. But that experienced steed declined all rash procedures; he took up his own easy trot, and was not to be coerced or coaxed into any other movement. And what a night it was! Mary Bunn bent herself almost double, striving after a little shelter from the storm. She remembered Tam O'Shanter. "The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last" ran in her mind side by side with Scriptural reminiscences of how the rain descended and the floods beat. Every now and then came a blast that almost took the gig off the road. Then the white horse stood still and braced himself, and the doctor retired yet more deeply into her waterproof. She tried to brighten up her spirits by thoughts of the help she was bearing to the suffering squire; she endeavoured to realize the dignity and importance of this first step in her vocation. But the way seemed wearily long.

Here was the hill, with the bridge lying in the hollow at its foot. Miss Bunn kept a tight rein, and hardly breathed as the old horse made his leisurely descent, and picked out his rough way. This peril once passed in safety, the end of her journey must be near at hand. Yes, she could discern the house, and presently pulled up at its gate. But the gate was closed: how neglectful of the young man not to have opened it for her!

For a minute or two she sat, expecting he, or someone else, would come. Nothing seemed to be stirring: the windows were all dark and silent. This was rather unusual where serious illness reigns. Perhaps Squire Morrison's room looked the other way.

Miss Bunn alighted and undid the gate, after some shaking and noise and trouble. At that moment, a deep, portentous sound rose on the air; there was a rush along the walk, and she scrambled back into her vehicle just in time to escape the onset of an enormous mastiff, which leaped and barked about as if wishing to tear everything to pieces.

Now, in spite of Miss Bunn's bravery as an M.D., she owned to a most unheroic fear of dogs: and the yelping, leaping, and onslaught of this one frightened her half to death. She drove frantically to the house door, calling out and crying. No lights yet: and that ferocious animal raging below her like a hungry lion.

The window just above her was thrown up. A gentleman, attired in a cotton night-cap, put out his head.

"What on earth's the matter? Who are you? What do you want?"

"I am Dr. Bunn. Is this Squire Morrison's?" she added, a sudden idea occurring to her that she had mistaken the house.

"*I* am Squire Morrison. Who is it, I ask?"

"It's the doctor that was sent for to the Squire. Won't you come down and call off your dog?"

"What on earth!" exclaimed the Squire, pausing in amazement. "Down, Towzer; down, sir."

"What is it, Squire?" said Mrs. Morrison in a disembodied voice, as it were, speaking out of the darkness of that corner of the room where stood the bed.

"Hang me if I know! Sounds like a woman's voice. Seemed as if she said something about the doctor, but the wind blows so I can't make it out."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Morrison, briskly. "Some one or other's taken ill and they have sent for you. Go down, Squire, with all haste."

Attiring himself, the Squire went down, opened the door and confronted Miss Bunn. Towzer was growling ominously, and she still sat in mortal fright.

"Dr. Mary Bunn! Sent for to me!" cried the Squire, effectually calling off the dog. "Well, I never!"

"But, are you not ill, sir?"

"Never was better in my life!" said the Squire. "Somebody has been imposing on you shamefully. Always send for Benedict if anything ails us; meaning no offence, of course. But come in, come in; don't stay out any longer in such a storm!"

"I had better drive home again," said poor Miss Bunn, in a faint voice, full of dismay at finding what a deception had been passed upon her.

"No, no! Twice over the same road in such a night is too much. Come in and rest awhile, at any rate. I'll put your horse under shelter, and call Mrs. Morrison; she'll be down in a minute."

Miss Bunn yielded, and he led the way into the sitting-room; fumbled about for matches and struck a light. Then he disappeared in search of his good lady, who presently arrived upon the scene full of ejaculated sympathy.

"Do tell!" she exclaimed. "Whoever saw the beat of this? It's a shamefully mean trick; whoever it was."

"I wish I knew," said the squire heartily. "I'd warm his back for him: he'd not forget it of one while."

"Dear, dear, you're sopping wet!" continued Mrs. Morrison. "And no wonder: I wouldn't turn a dog out in such a night. See here: the kitchen fire is still alight: you come to it, and we'll dry some of these wet things."

The charitable project was delayed a little, for Miss Bunn suddenly

burst into tears. She was well aware of the disfavour with which her calling would be regarded, and had never been heedless of it, though she had chosen to persevere. This rude deception overwhelmed her with chagrin; she felt herself the butt of contumely; for the moment it seemed as if all her hopes and herself were abased and trampled on, and she sobbed convulsively.

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Morrison. "I am not a bit surprised. Such a ride! and then the dog! It's enough to make anybody nervous."

Mary Bunn did not yield long to this weakness. She wiped her eyes, and tried to smile. "It was not the dog," she said, "though I was terribly afraid of him."

"People are generally afraid of him," acknowledged Mrs. Morrison, "but his bark is worse than his bite. Now you come right along to the kitchen fire," she hospitably continued: "we'll see if we can't make you a bit comfortable."

"I am ashamed to give you so much trouble," murmured Miss Bunn: "and to disturb your rest too!"

"Pity if we can't do as much for a neighbour. It is no fault of yours. You need not be in a hurry about starting back again: you shall have some breakfast in the morning before you go."

But this hospitality was thankfully declined, Miss Bunn preferring to leave at an early hour for the better avoidance of conjecture and inquiry concerning her nocturnal visit. Left alone, she dropped asleep, in spite of mortified feeling and of disappointment, and awoke refreshed as the sunbeams streamed in at the window. The storm was over, and the morning a pleasant one. Mrs. Morrison made her drink a cup of coffee; and she started for home. Squire Morrison's last words were. "I'd not let anybody know I came out; I'd not give 'em that triumph."

The Harebells were indignant on learning the trick that had been played upon her. But they had no clue to those who had perpetrated it. Mr. Harebell did not know the young man who had brought the message: did not even see his face, or properly hear his voice, for he spoke out of the muffled folds of a comforter. That it was done in fun, not in spite or malice, was readily believed.

II.

A little practice dropped in to Miss Bunn by degrees. She was nearer at hand than Dr. Benedict, and perhaps in simple cases as efficient. An entrance once effected, Miss Bunn was almost sure to make her way. Her genuine pity for the suffering, her eagerness to relieve them, failed not to impress all with whom she came in contact. Mothers were more at ease with her than with the grave and busy Dr.

Benedict. They could talk over a hundred little matters of interest, for which they would not venture to detain him: an approaching marriage, the last sermon, or the next tea-party. She gossiped back, was sensible and pleasant. These qualities did at least as much for her as any confidence in her skill could have done. So she got called in to slight cases; and there was always Dr. Benedict at hand to be sent for if the case grew serious.

Summer waned, and September came on with days of scorching heat and evenings of unusual coolness. How refreshing was that coolness! Without it the weather would have been almost unendurable. People sat by open windows or out on the steps of porches and piazzas, to enjoy the change from the sultriness of daylight. Careful mothers called to their girls to beware of taking cold, and received laughing responses that there was no sort of danger and that the night air was delicious. Now and then some one or other came in, shivered slightly, and said the evening was a little chilly after all. Next morning these persons were languid, indisposed for motion, and willing to admit that late sitting in the open air was perhaps imprudent at this season. Perhaps the season in that particular year was unusually favourable to illness. At any rate, real sickness declared itself. Dr. Benedict was summoned, and fever ran its fiery, and, in some instances, fatal course. Cases of the kind multiplied, till the disease was almost epidemic.

Dr. Benedict drove up to his own door one afternoon, weary, and hoping for a little interval of rest and quiet; he had been abroad since the dawn. But the red comforter tied around the post of the piazza warned him not to drive to the stable till he had communicated with the authorities within. Miss Keturah came out to him in excitement. "Mrs. Beams has sent up," she said, "and I thought you would rather drive than walk there, tired as you must be. And there's a call of a different sort," she added. "Mr. Harebell, from Rudley Corners, has been here. His boy is down with the fever, and *that woman* wants you to come in consultation."

"Very well," returned the doctor quietly. "Did Harebell name any hour?"

"Why, you don't think of going, do you?" asked Miss Keturah, in amazement.

"Certainly. I don't see how I could refuse; in reason or in humanity."

"I don't know that I thought you would refuse to go," returned Miss Keturah. "But you will surely tell them you must have the case in your own hands. They would make no objection, you may be sure; they are old friends of yours."

"I never interfere between patient and doctor, Keturah: you know that. If I am required to meet this Miss Bunn in consultation, I shall meet her."

Mrs. Harebell met him at the door when he arrived. "Oh, doctor, poor James is very bad," she exclaimed. "If anything happens, we shall never forgive ourselves that we didn't send for you sooner."

The physician spoke a few cheering words, and followed her to the sick-room. There lay the merry, active boy of a few days ago, scorched with fever, tossing, moaning in pain, his eyes opening now and then into a dull, unconscious stare. The doctor sat down by the bedside, felt the pulse, listened to the hurried breathing, intently regarded the flushed countenance. The mother, standing near, studied his own face with yet more intentness; but learned nothing from its inscrutable gravity.

A pleasant-looking young woman, pale with anxiety and watching, came quietly into the room. Some relation, the doctor thought, who had been sitting up with the sick boy, and was worn out in consequence. He was never more astonished in his life than when Mrs. Harebell introduced her as Miss Bunn. He had never chanced to see his sister practitioner, but had set her down as a type of his favourite aversion, the strong-minded woman; had pictured her to himself as a large, raw-boned, masculine personage of loud voice and decided manner. Now it was certain that his very first glimpse of this lady had produced on him a most agreeable impression.

The two were shown into another room, and proceeded to consult. Ah! what a solemn time it was for the friends of the sufferer! How they looked at the closed door; as if the fiat of life or death would issue at its opening!

Within, Miss Bunn detailed the patient's symptoms and her own course of treatment. Dr. Benedict asked such questions as occurred to him, and then gave his opinion. It was a serious, but by no means a hopeless case; and he commended highly the treatment she had given it thus far.

Mary Bunn brightened at once. "I am so glad you approve of it," she said impulsively. "I did my best; but it is such a relief to hear you confirm my judgment. And now I hope, doctor, that you will be willing to take the case into your own hands."

"Why so? You do not feel yourself unequal to it?"

"It is not so much what I feel as what others think."

"Is it not wiser to continue then? If you like, I will come in and see that things go right."

"You are very kind—very," returned Miss Bunn. "If Mr. and Mrs. Harebell are willing—and if you advise it—I will go on. But you will give me the benefit of your countenance and experience—you really mean it?"

"Certainly. I shall be most happy to aid you in any way." And they talked a little farther, when he bowed and left the room. Mrs. Harebell was anxiously waiting.

"What do you think?" she said, venturing at last to put the direct question. "Will he get up again, or"—she stopped and looked with imploring eyes into the doctor's face. How often such eyes had sought his own, beseeching for the hope he could not give! But now, at least, the response might be encouraging.

"Get up again? I hope so," he said cordially. "He has had good care from Miss Bunn, and I hope it will carry him through. She has done all that any one could do, Mrs. Harebell, and you may trust to her. However, I shall look in to-morrow."

Mary Bunn was of a sensitive, timid temperament; and no one but herself knew how grateful she felt to Dr. Benedict, or what a pleasant impression his interview with her had left. She had imagined he would treat her slightingly, perhaps with contempt: but the event had proved to be directly the reverse.

As to the doctor himself, he had liked her amazingly, and carried away of her just as favourable an impression. He liked her modest, sensible demeanour; he trusted her clear, intelligent face. Miss Keturah demanded all particulars when he got home.

"Just imagine it!" she exclaimed, after listening to him, greatly scandalized. "Such airs! A regular consultation, just as if it had been Dr. Murdoch or Dr. Thomas! It was quite beneath you, John. Did she seem as if she knew anything?"

"Yes. She appeared to know as much as most young medical men do."

"The idea! And what sort of looking person is she, John?"

"Really Keturah, I can't tell you. Rather good-looking, I think. But you know I don't profess to be a judge."

"I daresay you could not tell whether she wears her hair as a woman ought, or short, like yours. You never do notice anything of that kind."

Dr. Benedict smiled. "Oh, not short, certainly."

"And what colour is it?"

"Colour? Oh, rather a dark, pretty auburn."

With the autumn frosts the fever abated. In some households reigned glad hearts, as those who had been stricken down came back to life and health; in others were sadness and silence, and places empty for evermore. But nature and man wrought on, pausing not for joy or sorrow; the harvests were gathered; children played among the fallen leaves; hearts were stirred by love, hope, ambition, as they had been from the beginning. Then the snow came: the same snow that spread its mantle over new-made graves called the boys out to coast, and filled the air with the merry sound of sleigh-bells.

Grandmamma had been wishing for a week to pay a visit to her eldest daughter, Mrs. Dodge; but the roads were so rough that she shrank

from the undertaking. Now, however, the snow had smoothed her way both literally and figuratively. Her wraps were brought out, and hung around the fire; the camlet cloak, the big, old-fashioned marten muff and tippet, the mocassins and quilted mittens. James begged hard to be her escort; he was quite well now, he urged, had been for some time, though still rather weak, and the fresh air would do him good. With some misgivings, his mother gave consent; and wrapped him up as if for an Arctic expedition. Grandma was made into a moving bundle of enormous size, the little foot-stove was filled with coals, and the pair started on their way in the open sleigh. The crisp air, the sparkling snow, the blue shadows and bluer sky were all delicious to the liberated boy. Only, as he passed the churchyard, and saw the white unbroken snow stretching over mound and hollow, a strange awe-struck feeling came over him. What if he were lying there now, and all this pleasant world were going on without him!

Mrs. Dodge, who had heard the sleigh-bells, was ready at the door-step to meet her visitors. A troop of children accompanied her, marshalled by Celestia, the eldest daughter—a fair, blue-eyed girl of twenty.

"I'm so glad to see you, mother!" said the bustling matron, assisting the old lady to alight. "It was strange, but something seemed to say to me that perhaps you might be over to day, seeing it is so fine. I said to Celeschy, as I rolled out the crust for my chicken-pie, 'Now, if your grandma is not here to help us eat this I shall be real disappointed.' And James, I am rejoiced that you are able to be out: you look remarkably well, considering. There, leave the horse to the man, and come straight in and warm yourselves."

The children surrounded the old lady, and formed a guard of honour to escort her to the red rocking-chair by the fire.

"What you got in your pocket, grandma?" asked little Lem, aware that she generally carried a supply of rock-candy, and too artless to disguise his longing.

"Bless his little heart!" exclaimed the old lady. "Look for yourself, deary, and see what you can find."

But a catastrophe was revealed. The lid of grandma's snuff-box had come off, and all the delicate straw-coloured crystals were sprinkled with the irritating powder. Little Lem, in the bitterness of his disappointment, began a prolonged howl. Celestia cut it short by suggesting that the candy might be washed; whereupon all the children trooped into the kitchen to assist at the ablution.

"It's so lucky you came to-day, mother," said Mrs. Dodge, in a low, confidential tone, glad to be rid of them. "I should have drove over to you in a day or two had you not come. You know that Squire Morrison's only son, Cyrus, and Celestia are engaged. Well, they want the wedding to be next month."

"Do tell!" exclaimed grandma, lifting her hands. "It seems but yesterday that she was a little child."

"She is full young. But Cyrus is doing well and feels as if he had the best right to her now. That's the way 'tis, mother. I suppose you had the same to go through in your day."

"Yes," said the old lady: "we bring our children up, and care for them, and have our hearts set upon them; and by-and-bye somebody comes along that is nothing to us, and never did us or them a hand's turn, and we are left alone, clean out of mind. It's not a happy thing, Lucy Ann; but, dear me, it's natural, I suppose. We were all the same. And it's for the best, after all; we can't always be here to look to our children, and it's well they should make other friends to care for them when we are gone. The great point is to get the right sort of companion. You and Maria were both wonderfully lucky, Lucy: there are not many such men as your husband and James Harebell."

"Well, so far as that goes, I think Celestia has made a good choice in Cyrus, mother. And so we are to have the wedding in the house next month; and I was thinking perhaps Maria would come over and help me with the preparations."

"Oh, she'll come if she can; never fear," answered grandma.

The children burst in upon them, James marshalling his cousin Celestia. The boy was very fond of her: she was five or six years his senior, yet he cherished hopes (boy fashion) of winning her for his sweetheart, and for his wife afterwards.

Celestia looked so charming to-day, and smiled so kindly on him, that he was in the seventh heaven.

Grandmamma glanced significantly at Celestia, who flushed like the dawn in return. Later, when the boys and the children were got rid of again, Celestia exhibited her patchwork quilts, bright with pink or Turkey red; her piles of undergarments, ruffled and stitched by her own hands; and manifold other preparations for the change awaiting her.

"Her papa is going to take us over to Boynton," said Mrs. Dodge, "the first day he can spare the time: we shall choose out her teaspoons, and china, and parlour nick-nacks, and all that. And there's her wedding-dress to get besides, and I don't know what all. We shall have our hands full, I guess."

In the midst of these plannings, a sudden thought struck the bride-elect. "Grandma," she asked, "do you see much of Dr. Benedict now?"

"Why, no, child, not very much. He has been quite attentive, calling to see how Jim got along, but that's all. Why do you ask?"

"Celeschy has a fancy—he calls here now and then, you know, mother—that he has a very good opinion of *your* little doctor—Miss Bunn," put in Mrs. Dodge.

"O fie!" said grandma. "What a notion! Celeschy thinks other people must be like herself—have their minds filled with sweethearts. Don't you believe a word of it, Lucy Ann."

Celestia blushed and laughed. She had certainly noticed that Dr. Benedict was fond of talking of Mary Bunn.

The pleasant day over, grandmamma and James started for home after an early tea, the latter buried in reminiscences of the good-bye kiss he had snatched from his cousin Celestia.

"James," spoke grandma suddenly, "you are getting to be a big boy, and ought to be fit to be trusted with a secret."

"I should think so," he replied, proudly.

"Well, then, be sure you don't breathe a lisp of it to anybody—but something's going to happen before long. It will be a splendid time for all you children. Your cousin Celeschy is to be married next month to Squire Morrison's son."

Poor James!

III.

"Just look there!" exclaimed Miss Keturah Benedict, as her brother returned from his round one day to dinner. And she handed him an invitation to the wedding.

"Who is it? Who's going to be married?" asked he.

"Celestia Dodge. She can't be a day over nineteen; not more than bare twenty at any rate. I wonder her mother hasn't more sense!"

"Oh! well," said the doctor, pleasantly, "perhaps you and I are not the best judges, Keturah. We are rather past that sort of thing ourselves; and these young folks may be more fit to make a choice than we suppose."

"I am past it, that's certain," she retorted with energy. "But as for you, I don't know. Men never think themselves too old for nonsense."

The doctor laughed. "At thirty-eight—and I'm that—I ought to have learnt prudence, I suppose. There's no knowing what I may do—or you either, Kettie. What will happen, will happen. When you shall have given yourself over to some one of the smart widowers around us, I may find my home too lonely."

"Smart widowers want a smarter bride than I should make," she answered. "They always expect their second wives to be younger and better-looking than their first. Come to dinner, John, and don't talk rubbish."

The wedding-day arrived: and towards evening a crowd of expectant guests assembled at the good old-fashioned house of Farmer Dodge. The preparations, in the shape of choice dishes, were great: the wedding-cakes were wonderful, the ice-creams good, the chicken

salad tempting; and, of all friends, who should have chiefly aided in this, but Dr. Mary Bunn. Her professional duties were slack, and she had gone over to help in Mrs. Harebell's place.

And wonderfully clever she showed herself to be: Mrs. Dodge openly said she had mistaken her vocation, and should have chosen that of domestic life. She trimmed the wedding-dress and the wedding-cake, and was even now engaged upstairs in pinning on the bride's veil and arranging her wreath of flowers.

A hum, a stir in the throng, a concentrated gaze upon the doorway—and lo! the bridal party entered. Clouds of white muslin, mists of tulle, soft blushes, and beaming eyes, were duly escorted by the adequate number of gentlemen. Celestia came in with her father. The group arranged themselves in the space cleared out for them before the large looking-glass in the large sitting-room; and the clergyman of the district, the Rev. Mr. Watkins, stepped forward to perform the ceremony. Celestia Dodge became Celestia Morrison.

Then came the banquet: a triumph of hospitality and culinary skill.

"Who is that nice-looking young lady, presiding in the middle there?" asked Miss Keturah Benedict, who had condescended to put frivolity out of mind and come, and who sat next to Squire Morrison.

"Don't you know? Why, that's the lady doctor: Miss Bunn."

"That! well, I'm sure!" cried Miss Keturah. "I had pictured her so very different—a strong-minded female, in spectacles. She looks—rather nice."

"She is very nice," said the Squire, emphatically.

Music succeeded to the banquet. Mary Bunn did not sing, but she listened to admiration. So, at least, thought one observer. Looking up, she chanced to meet his eye, and coloured slightly: a very becoming flush, thought Dr. Benedict; and he moved nearer to her side.

"A pleasant evening," he remarked.

"Very pleasant," replied Miss Bunn. "Celestia makes a charming bride, does she not?"

"Very charming."

They conversed for some little time, but hardly exchanged another word during the remainder of the evening. It is remarkable, however, what satisfactory conclusions good judges of character can draw from the slightest premises. Miss Bunn saw clearly that Dr. Benedict had a fineness of taste and an accuracy of observation which no one could suspect from his quiet, staid exterior. While the doctor, on his part, felt that Miss Bunn appeared to even greater advantage in a scene like this than she had done in the sick-room where they first met. He could not but think, as she moved about among the guests, that she would look particularly well in a white bridal dress and a flowing veil.

The departure of the bride and bridegroom for their own home was the signal for the general breaking-up. A number of sleighs stood in readiness at the door. Dr. Benedict was looking out for his own when his sister accosted him.

"John, I am not going home with you: I am going with the Laymans. They'll drop me at our door."

"Oh, very well," said he; and helped her in.

The next sleigh—a family one—to draw up, was Mr. Harebell's. He had a large party to go in it.

"You will be very much crowded," observed the doctor. "Miss Bunn"—taking her hand—"let me give you a seat in mine."

"Oh—thank you," she answered, a pleasant flush rising to her face. "But that would be crowding you and Miss Benedict."

"Not at all: it is her seat I offer you. She has deserted me to go with the Laymans." And he handed her in.

It was a lovely night, the moon at the full, the air clear and still, the sleighing excellent: just the weather to stimulate the spirits and promote conversation; yet they drove on in perfect silence. The doctor had sometimes imagined how pleasant it would be to have Miss Bunn sitting by his side; he thought of dozens of things to say to her; remarks, tender or meaning, or only waiting encouragement to be so: and yet he sat in silence. Miss Bunn was beginning to think she must say something, no matter what, to break it—when he spoke.

"Are you very busy just now?"

The entirely practical nature of this question steadied Miss Bunn's nerves, and she answered readily.

"Not as busy as I should like to be. I feel sometimes rather discouraged. I do not advance as I thought to."

"Ah!" said the doctor, reflectively. "I sometimes wonder, madam, what women propose to themselves in undertaking our profession?"

"To—to earn their bread; and to be of some service to the world while they are earning it," she answered, timidly.

"Very good. But—putting other considerations aside—women are so delicate, so unfit to contend with bad weather, fatiguing rides, and all those things which, in the country, at any rate, are the necessary portion of a physician's life."

"In the best of life's daily duties, there is always some drawback. We must make the best of it, whatever it may be."

"Men must. But I cannot see that ladies *need* take upon themselves unpleasant duties. The end of a woman's life is—to marry."

Miss Bunn gazed steadfastly at the horse's shadow on the snow.

"And the most fitting and the best end for her," he added.

"Marriage does not enter into our calculations," she rejoined, with some hesitation.

"Oh, does it not? Do you mean to say that it never enters into yours? Never?"

Whether it was the question, so boldly put, whether it was the tone, that had in it something peculiar, Mary Bunn grew embarrassed, and did not answer. The doctor, instead of repeating it, looked steadily into her downcast face. Just for a moment their eyes met; and then he took her hand in his and held it there.

"You will think better of this; I am sure you will," she whispered, as he handed her from the cutter on their arrival at Mr. Harebell's. "We—you really know so very little of me."

"We shall have all our lives to get acquainted in," the doctor answered. "I shall see you again to-morrow."

Miss Bunn, going in, had to meet with some astonishment from the Harebells. They had been at home ten minutes at the very least. With so good a horse as the doctor's and with so light a load, the delay was unaccountable. Had any accident happened?

"We came by the other road, you know," said Miss Bunn, in explanation.

"The other road! Which road?"

"Round by Squire Morrison's."

"Why, so did we. That's the shortest road. The doctor *must* have driven slowly."

Mary Bunn could say no more. When she went up to her own room she set the lamp upon the drawers, and looked at the face reflected in the mirror. Was it really so—did the doctor find anything attractive there? And would he really persevere? And supposing that he did, could she give up the career to which she had devoted herself and so long looked forward to be useful in? What would her people in the East say to her desertion of the cause? Above all, what would the doctor's sister think of such a marriage?

Some of these questions were answered the next day, when Dr. Benedict drove up and held his promised interview. To all her pseudo objections—and her heart was beating with too much wild pleasure to allow of their being real—he had a disarming answer. To the chief of them—Keturah—he only smiled, and bade her leave Keturah to him.

And, taken in conjunction with the mysteriously-retarded drive last night, the Harebells were not slow at drawing their own conclusions, when the doctor came forth to depart and Miss Bunn ran up to shut herself in her room.

"You see, Celeschy was right, after all, mother," observed Mrs. Harebell.

"'Set a thief to catch a thief,'" said grandma. "I'm sure I never should have had an idea of it. It's a good thing, I believe, no matter how it came about: for they are worthy people, both of them, and will

suit one another well. But whatever his sister Keturah will say to it passes me."

This was the question that occurred to everyone. It was a knotty problem; even, perhaps, to the doctor.

"I drove Miss Bunn home last night, Keturah. The Harebells were crowded, so I asked her to take your place."

"Oh!" said Miss Keturah.

"And I think—I am almost sure—that she will transfer what little practice she has to me."

"What, is she tired of doctoring?"

"Something of that."

"She is a sensible woman. And I don't mind saying, John, that I took a great fancy to her in spite of my prejudices. She has a nice face, a nice, modest, womanly manner—and she is not strong-minded at all."

"Not at all. I fancy she'll take a husband next."

Something in the tone struck Miss Keturah. She looked at him keenly.

"John! It is not *you?*"

"And if it were, Keturah?"

"O, brother, brother!" she exclaimed despairingly; "how little you know what you are about to do! I declare you are all alike. A man may be the best man that ever trod—and the wisest—but when it comes to dealing with women, he is *such* a goose!"

This burst of feeling brought forth a long silence, for the doctor did not dare to confute it.

"Tell me one thing, John. Is the matter settled?"

"Yes: unless you forbid the banns," returned the doctor, smiling. "I can't say what will be done in that case. Miss Bunn is most anxious for your good opinion and countenance."

"I presume so," observed Miss Keturah, dryly. "Well, John, I have said my say. You must follow your own devices. I have no call to let or hinder. As to myself—I have my own little property, and can find a home elsewhere."

"I hoped to have a more friendly word than that from my only sister," he said in a pained tone. "After all we have been to each other, Keturah!"

Tears came into Miss Keturah's eyes, long strangers to such weakness. She struggled hard with herself.

"You *shall* have it, John," she said. "If I am afraid for you, it surely is not because I undervalue you. If you must marry, perhaps Mary Bunn will be as good a wife for you as any other you could find. Give me time, John, to get reconciled to the idea."

Miss Keturah was more sad at heart than she cared to show. It is ever thus. For years she and her brother, who was younger than

herself, had shared each other's home and thoughts; for a far longer period he had been her chief object, her dearest pride in life. Now, someone else was coming to take her place, to be the first and best beloved. How hard it seemed to her, let those women who have experienced a similar blow tell. And yet—who amidst us would say that he ought to have kept single for his sister's sake?

Three years later, Dr. Benedict sat by his own fireside, his little two-year-old girl upon his knee. Evening drew on: without, a snow-storm whirled and whitened; the windows shook, and latches rattled sharply; within, all was light, and warmth, and rosy comfort. The wife, from her rocking-chair, tried to coax the child to her arms, but the little Mary defied temptation, and held resolutely to her father's stout forefinger. From the opposite side of the fire Miss Keturah regarded the group complacently. It was her conviction that never did earth, and scarcely heaven, contain such a cherub as that one particular infant.

A horse and gig clattered up outside. The door-bell rang loudly.

"Oh! dear," exclaimed the wife. "I'm afraid it is some one for you, John."

And so it proved; a summons "over the hills and far away."

"How I wish you had not to go in this storm, John!" she whispered.

"Perhaps you would like to go in my stead, dear," he answered, a twinkle in his eye, pausing in the midst of wrapping up. "If so, I announce myself a convert to woman's rights: at least, for this occasion."

"Ah!" replied his wife, laughing, "you are very triumphant because I proved unequal to my opportunities. But there are staunch women left, my good sir, though I was recreant, who are trying to make the best of themselves and their rights."

"A woman's best right," upspake Miss Keturah, "is to be taken care of and made comfortable. That's my theory, Mary. And, my dear, I'd not have you anybody's wife but his for the world."

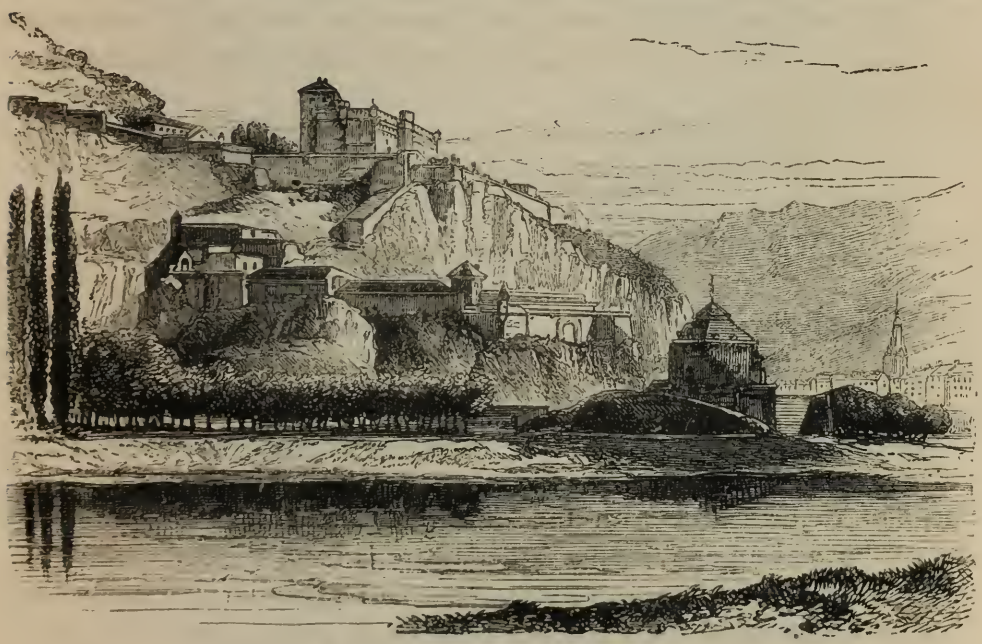
And Mary glanced gratefully into her husband's eyes as he bent to kiss her before starting.

So that was the ignominious ending of the public career of Doctor Mary Bunn.

A MAY PICNIC.

IT was a warm, glorious morning. Just the morning for a drive amidst such scenery as we get round about Grenoble; or for a picnic, where, far from the haunts of men and the sounds of life, we might encamp in some quiet nook and indulge our taste for the beautiful without fear of interruption. The mountains were bathed in splendour; the splendour of shadow and sunshine. The snowy summits looked cool and far away. So cool, so far away, so different from the temperature of the valleys, they seemed to belong to another world.

Such was the impression made upon us down below, where everything was hot and broiling; where lurked no suspicion or appearance of



BASTILLE AND PORTE DE FRANCE, GRENOBLE.

snow, save where the fruit-trees had showered down their superfluous blossoms upon the bright greensward beneath.

I had opened the window of my room at the château and was gazing out upon the scene, which has already been brought under the notice of the readers of the ARGOSY. Immediately below us, on the slope of the Alps, were the peasants' humble cottages, most of them for the moment deserted. Their occupants had gone forth—some to tend cattle, others to their various trades. One man might be seen at his door, planing away at his carpenter's bench. There ran the lovely river, cool and majestic enough, even amidst surroundings of infinite majesty—the majesty of grand, calm, snow-capped, pine-covered mountains; of which the eye can never tire of seeing, or the tongue of praising, or the pen of recording. The air vibrated with

the songs of countless nightingales, pouring forth from all sides their unceasing melody.

Upon this scene I was gazing for the hundredth time, in silent wonder, when M—— entered, and put my meditations into words.

"I have been thinking," said she, "that it would be a delightful day for a picnic. I want to show you the Cascade d'Allier. It is altogether lovely. We could not have a finer opportunity than this."

"Les beaux esprits se rencontrent," I quoted. "I too was thinking that it was exactly the day for a picnic, or a long country drive. Where is this Cascade d'Allier?"

"Then you will go?" she returned, passing over the question.

It is a wise principle in life to fall in with the propositions and suggestions of others when they do not too strongly violate one's own pet sympathies or antipathies: It is an easy way of securing peace and a quiet life, and making the world good-humoured with itself. But when suggestions happen to be the echo of one's own wishes, life becomes very delightful.

"I am quite at your service," I answered. "A picnic to the Cascade d'Allier sounds promising."

"I have long owed Madame de Bellechasse a visit," continued M——. "We will take her house on our way, and ask her to join us."

"Willingly," was my reply. "I am anxious to make the acquaintance of Madame la Baronne. Such a woman must be worth knowing."

Madame la Baronne de Bellechasse was the widow of a French nobleman of the ancien régime: who, like other men of the same order, had died leaving his wife a long name, but a slender income. She had to do battle with the world single handed, and bring up several boys at an age when a father's care is most needed. She had managed her property entirely herself; had planned alterations and improvements upon her land, and raised it in value. She had taught herself English and Latin, and many other branches of learning that do not enter into a woman's education, in order that she might herself become her sons' first instructor, and lay up a good foundation against the time to come. And well they repaid her care and affection.

Nothing was too great, nothing too minute, for her superintendence. She devoted as much time and attention to her poultry yard and her young kids as to the raising of farm buildings, the draining of her land, or the investing of her moneys.

It was to this Madame de Bellechasse we were now to pay a visit. I had heard so much about her that I was glad to make her personal acquaintance.

The order was given for the corbeille—a waggonette with a roof to it, and curtains that closed in or drew aside at pleasure: the fashionable equipage for ordinary occasions in this part of the world—and

in a very short time François the coachman, looking upon his box the very opposite to the pattern of an English Jehu, had driven round.

So we started. On the one hand the château, on the other the orange trees, the orchards, the rising mountains; immediately in front of us, the long, fine old avenue, with its nightingales and blackcaps, in answering note. We were four in the carriage. Mrs. J—, M—, four-year-old Katie: the fairy of the château, the loveliest little face, the most graceful form, ever seen; the most delightfully mischievous enfant terrible that ever breathed: and the present writer.

The drive was as grateful and delicious as drive could be. On all sides were the mountains, every moment changing form as François whipped up his horse into quicker trot. The air was hot certainly, but there was a lightness about it that took away all oppression: it was sparkling and dazzling in its brilliancy. The trees waved in the breeze; the leaves glinted, and shimmered, and rustled in the sunshine. The deep blue sky was unclouded.

Presently we turned into a long, straight road, lined on either side with a row of trees, and Mrs. J—— breathed more freely. The horse had been somewhat frisky; and she, at all times nervous, was this morning unusually timid.

"François," she called out to the coachman, "be careful. Drive more slowly. That stream," she added to me, indicating one that ran by the road-side, "is of greath depth. If we were all turned into it nothing could save us."

No sooner were the words uttered than the horse turned suddenly and sharply round, and to all appearance we were plunging into the treacherous water. One scream from Mrs. J——, and she fell back fainting. A piercing shriek from M——; a terrific sobbing from poor Katie, at the sight of so much distress; and, I regret to say, a subdued sound of laughter from the only male member of the quartet.

It was impossible to suppress it at the moment. The situation was too ridiculous. The tragedy was too much of a comedy. For the alarm had been a false one. François had merely turned over the bridge leading to Madame de Bellechasse's. But Mrs. J——, seeing nothing but water, had deemed her words prophetic, and our doom sealed.

She did not quite faint, but her terror had been very real; and for some time her attack of trembling was painful to witness. A draught of wine restored her to something like composure, and we soon drew up at Madame la Baronne's hospitable mansion.

She was at home. We were ushered into a sitting-room furnished in the French style, but a style that would obtain scant favour in the fashionable salons of Paris. The black horsehair chairs were old, worn, and comfortless. Some of them even were of common wood, rudely made, with ordinary wooden seats. The walls were hung

round with portraits of individuals who had once been more or less illustrious. One old ancestor reposed in a corner of the room—there was no space left to hang him—but from his expression it seemed very evident that he was being treated, upon canvas, in a manner he would never have tolerated in the flesh. Some men are not born to be put into corners, or to pass their lives, like the violets, in the shade. Here was one of them. In the middle of the room was a small square of carpet.

"This," one immediately concluded, "is the room of a woman who despises the easy comfort and soft places of life. Everything about her must be conducive to energy and activity. 'Up and be doing' is no doubt her motto: possibly joined to 'Fais ce que tu dois,

PONT DE CLAIX.

advienne que pourra.' The downy places of existence must be left to the soft-natured and effeminate."

The fact of possessing a key to the life of the mistress of the room, no doubt enabled one to draw so wise a deduction. It is easy to make the egg stand on end when we have learned the trick.

In about ten minutes the baroness entered, with a thousand quiet apologies for keeping us waiting. She was engaged in some household task which could not be left at the moment.

"I am with but one servant," she said in her foreign English, which she spoke very prettily. "I do not find them anywhere. It is most difficult now. They will not come into the country; they will all live in the towns. And so I often have to do many things myself."

She was a tall, ladylike woman, dressed in black alpaca, with a black cap upon her head. There was a look of energy and determination about her mouth that might have been masculine, but for the

mildness of her voice, and the gentle expression of her soft brown eyes.

Her youngest boy came in; a lad of ten or twelve; in a blue blouse, his hair cut French fashion—as closely as they cut the prisoners' in England. Madame assured us of her inability to accompany us to the Cascade d'Allier, and conducted us over her house to show us how very much work was in progress. Everything was as un-English as it possibly could be. Metaphorically speaking, where we put white the French put black, and vice versa.

The internal inspection over, we visited the poultry yard, admired the condition of the fowls, the majestic strut of the lord of the harem, and the tenderness of the new little kids, beautiful in their suppleness.

GRENOBLE.

Mrs. J—— and the baronne struck a bargain on the spot: the former was to receive two of the new young kids in exchange for a sheep. Each lady seemed satisfied with the terms of agreement.

Then—whilst they returned indoors for a few moments; to compare notes over past times, when servants were to be had for the asking, and present times, when they were not to be bought with gold—Gaston the youth conducted M—— and me over the grounds, and pointed out various improvements achieved or contemplated, and talked intelligently. He was a well-bred, polite boy; particularly attentive to M——, and insisted upon carrying a small cloak she had thrown over her arm. He spoke English well, but especially amused us by uttering most energetically, after every sentence addressed to him, the exclamation "Hein?"

"But, Gaston," we remarked, "it is not polite to say 'Hein?' each time you are spoken to. You should listen more attentively."

"Hein?" said the boy, immediately, louder than ever. And with a laugh we left the matter.

But time was going on and we were bound for the Cascade d'Allier. We could delay no longer. With many an au revoir, and a promise to return in a day or two for the young kids, we bid adieu to Madame de Bellechasse and Gaston, and continued our route. The ladies laughed as they passed over the bridge and remembered their late terror. They laugh best who laugh last. Had their fears not been imaginary there certainly would have been no laughter at this moment.

We continued our journey down the long straight road with the trees on either side, until we turned into closer proximity with the mountains. Presently we reached the Pont de Claix—the Pont du Diable, or Devil's bridge, as it is called—that for ages has been considered one of the wonders of the neighbourhood. But the present generation has awakened to the fact that, if a wonder, it is an uncomfortable, not to say a dangerous one: and they have built another and more sensible bridge beside it. The accompanying illustration will give the reader some idea of the past and present modes of architecture. It will also be perceived that on a very windy day when a vehicle reached the apex of the bridge, it stood in great danger of being blown over.

The new bridge was not yet opened, and we all alighted, and walked over the old one, and admired the rude architecture of this singular and remarkable structure; immense pains must have been taken to render it as dangerous and terrifying to weak nerves as ingenuity could suggest.

The road was very beautiful as we continued our drive. Everything was in its spring freshness; the wayside flowers were rich and plentiful; primroses and violets grew in wild profusion and scented the air. The pine-trees clothed the mountain side with their melancholy verdure; their pointed tops shoothing one above another, like church spires beckoning upwards. On yonder summit the snow glittered in the sunshine, cold, proud and isolated in its spotless purity. It is impossible ever to see these snow mountains without thinking of those words in Scripture "Raiments white as snow."

We drove along through all this beauty; a silent party, save for the chattering of little Katie: for when surrounding nature is so glorious, conversation seems out of place and harmony. The mind becomes filled with thoughts and impressions that cannot be clothed in language.

At last we reached the village where the carriage was to put up. From this point we must walk to the waterfall. We entered the homely inn, saw our hamper of provisions safely housed, and bespoke an omelette and various other small refectory additions to be ready on our return.

The praises of this waterfall had been sung again and again in my

ears. I expected to find it a miniature representation of the Falls of Niagara: or at least little inferior to the great waterfall at Gastein. I was assured that the distance was but trifling. We should be back immediately.

We started on our walk. Past the village blacksmith's; past thatched cottages, picturesque with spring creepers; past small farm houses; until, clear of all, we found ourselves in company with nothing but the mountains, and the fields, all sloping upwards—ourselves walking in the middle of the slope.

It was an intensely hot day, and in spite of all the surrounding beauty we found our walk a toil and trouble. Mrs. J—— had taken a red shawl over her arm, though for what purpose even she could not fathom. This we carried in turns: for the ladies, ever more considerate and unselfish than the opposite sex, would not permit me to bear the whole burden of this Indian production. In truth I was at that time in a state of health that rendered all walking an effort, without the addition even of the smallest weight.

After half an hour's tolerably quick march, seeing no signs of any waterfall, I began to make suspicious inquiries.

"We are almost there," said M——. "Patience, and you will soon hear its roar."

"Roar!" cried Katie, half inclined to be frightened. "Is it a wild beast, mamma? And will it eat me up?"

She stood still; defiant; waiting for the answer. A roar in her mind evidently had but one interpretation.

"No, my darling," replied mamma, laughing. "It is only water, and cannot hurt you."

"But if it roars it must be alive," persisted Katie. "It couldn't roar if it was dead."

"I tell you," returned mamma, "it is only water. The same kind of water you are so fond of playing with in the garden, and for which mamma has so often to put her disobedient little girl to bed. Come, Katie, you are quite safe; and moreover you have Uncle Charles to protect you."

"It's only lions and tigers that roar," said Katie, betraying her sex by her partiality for the last word. "And I don't believe Uncle Tarles could fight lions and tigers. And I'm tired, and couldn't run away if they ran after me. Mamma, I'm *so* hot and tired, and I want to sit down."

"Well said, Katie," remarked Mrs. J——. "I, too, am tired, and must rest awhile. We will sit down on this lovely bit of green, and my shawl shall be our rug."

We were none of us sorry for the respite, and when it was time to be going forward again, Mrs. J—— suggested that M—— and I should lead the way; she and Katie would follow more leisurely.

So we went on and on; and after about another hour's walk we suddenly came upon the wonderful cascade.

"That!" I cried, gazing in astonishment at a thin streak of water running down the mountain-side. "Is it possible that we have toiled so far to see so little? Surely you are joking. The cascade is still invisible."

"That is it," replied M——. "We have had fine weather, and the volume of water is somewhat reduced; and the snows have scarcely begun to melt. I can assure you it is one of the excursions of the neighbourhood. Everyone comes to see the Cascade d'Allier."

Certainly it was a wonderful walk to all who were indifferent to heat and fatigue. The surrounding scenery possessed every point of beauty. The eye might gaze for ever, and never weary. But the cascade itself was scarcely worth the labour it had cost us to reach it. One long thin streak of white foamy water, falling, it must be admitted, from a somewhat appalling height. But there was no volume, no grandeur, no roar. A little splashing, cool and pleasant to the ear, and that was all.

"So far," I said, "for so little. Many things have exceeded our expectations, but this at least is disappointing. Think now, of les Gorges du Fier, and ——"

"Hold!" cried M——. "Comparisons in nature, as in everything else, are always a mistake: and I hold ingratitude as the basest of crimes. Rejoice in that which is before you, sans arrière pensée."

The mistake had been to laud it so greatly beforehand: so that the excited imagination had pictured something far beyond the reality. In itself the scene upon which we gazed was both grand and beautiful; the green slopes upon which we stood were cool and pleasant. From an elevation we looked around, and called upon Mrs. J—— and Katie. Echo alone replied.

"They have evidently given in," said M——, laughing. "We shall find them seated on the red shawl, half way back."

And so it proved. They had walked on until both were so tired they fairly gave in; the shawl was once more spread, and Mrs. J.——, drawing forth bon-bons from her pocket, amused Katie with wonderful stories. Her eyes were round and large with attention; her cheeks were pale with fatigue. Her companion's were little less pallid, and she had not had the advantage of an absorbed imagination to sustain her strength.

But the walk back had to be gone through and endured, though it led to martyrdom. We reached the inn at last, thoroughly done up with heat and fatigue, after an absence of more than three hours. Luckily we had the salle-à-manger entirely to ourselves; and Mrs. J—— triumphantly brought forth some champagne which she had surreptitiously introduced into the hamper before leaving home.

It was a rough room, with bare whitewashed walls; and the seats were rude. But never seemed spring-couch more easy than these hard benches; never nectar more grateful to the gods than that champagne to us poor heat-stricken, worn-out mortals. The room pretended not to elegance; the long table, covered with a coarse white cloth, might have come out of Noah's ark; but it was cool and shady; and if the champagne was nectar, the omelette was ambrosia. Never seemed anything half so savoury.

"If ever I could forgive anyone for taking just a little too much," said Mrs. J——, "it would be under such circumstances as these."

"That is to say," returned M——, "an unlimited supply of sunshine, fatigue, and Veuve Clicquot."

"Precisely. But unfortunately—or the contrary—for us, our two first conditions are great, and our Veuve Clicquot is limited to one bottle."

"Of which," I remarked, anxious to replenish her glass, "you are bound to take your share."

But upon this point we disagreed. Her glass once filled she absolutely refused a second instalment: protesting that with her, in such matters, a little more than a little was always much too much.

Before our banquet came to an end Katie was fast asleep: that dead sleep of childhood which often supervenes upon extreme fatigue, and which is so difficult to arouse.

So was she put into the carriage. During the whole drive home she stirred not, hand or foot. So, asleep, was she carried into the château; undressed standing, but still asleep, and put to bed; and never awoke until late the next morning.

If it could only be thus with us in after life! Rather does fatigue banish slumber, and we toss about upon an uneasy pillow and long for unconsciousness. And perhaps that verse passes through the mind, of which we one day heard the following new version from the pulpit, at the conclusion of a twenty minutes' breathless flow of oratory: "Where the weary cease from troubling, and the wicked are at rest!"

The preacher delivered the words with feeling and pathos, and closed his book in all unconsciousness. And we, astonished at the new reading of an old friend, when the congregation rose, forgot to do likewise.

But we have never forgotten our excursion to the Cascade d'Allier; the long walk, the intense noon-day heat, the fatigue: and above all the banquet of ambrosia and nectar that came in at the end, and perhaps—who knows? saved our lives.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

RUPERT HALL.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

THE long dark train swept down the avenue, through the line of trees. There was no hearse, no mourning-coach; it would have been superfluous to employ them, for the church stood within sight of the avenue-gates. The clergymen, the doctors, the bearers with their heavy burden, the mourners and the followers, all were on foot, and the dreary autumn wind, whistling through the trees, scattered the falling leaves over them in showers. *That burden!* I stood at one of the upper windows, convulsed with grief, for it was all that remained of my revered and darling mother. I was young to be left in the world without her; my fifteenth birthday had but just come round.

They were soon back; so soon—as it seemed to me. The visitors remained down stairs, but my father came in search of me. He sat down on the sofa, and drew me to him: his eyes were red and swollen and his face was pale. "Jane," he whispered, drawing me to his breast, "henceforth we must be all in all to each other."

We were in my mother's dressing-room, where I had wandered to watch that departing train. As my head rested where he had placed it, my eyes fell on a pair of fur slippers, which she had used to slip on when her feet were cold, and which must have been overlooked when Charlotte put away her things after all was over. These familiar objects of every-day life brought our loss more forcibly home to me, and I cried out aloud in my desolation.

"Oh, papa! if I could but have died with her!"

"Hush, hush, my child. For you, time will arise with healing on its wings."

How long we sat there, and how hopelessly we wept, I cannot tell. That day appears, even now, so full of misery, that I care not to recall it. Ay, and for many, many days after that, I know that we both shed bitter tears; apart, if not together.

"We must have someone to supply—in a measure—her place to you," my father said to me, when a few weeks had gone by. "I cannot part with you for school ——"

"School!" I interrupted. "Oh, papa! Why cannot the masters continue to come to me as usual?"

"I do not speak particularly of your studies, Jane, but you must have a companion here, one to train and guide you. If I could but find a judicious governess ——"

"Oh, papa," I again pleaded, in excitement, "not a governess! Anything but that."

"Be calm, Jane, and reasonable. I tell you it would be more of a companion than a governess. It is not well for you to live on here alone. The neighbours, I hear, are already saying that I am careless of your interests. Your mother would counsel the step: let that reconcile you to it."

And I said no more.

Living at the other end of Teversham, more that a mile away, for our village was long and straggling, were some relatives of my dear mamma's. Old Mrs. Rupert, and two daughters. I never liked them: even as a child, I could see they were selfish and most insincere. They were of good family, always boasting of their connexion with the Ruperts at the Hall. There was quite a colony of Ruperts in and about Teversham: all very proud, and very poor—save the family at the Hall: they were rich enough. When Jane Wall, daughter of old Colonel Wall, married my father, Robert Dixon, they said she had lowered herself because she was slightly connected with the Ruperts at the Hall; while he, and his father before him, had made their money in business as solicitors.

We went to call upon old Mrs. Rupert, and told her it was decided that I should have a governess. She spoke much against it; and her daughters, Betsy and Louisa, abused governesses to my heart's content. They assured my father there was not a governess in the three kingdoms but would snap him up and marry him, if she got the chance; and it was decided, on the spur of that unlucky moment, that Louisa Rupert should take up her residence with us, and be to me in the light of a mother. I did not like the proposal in the abstract, but it was more palatable than that of the governess, and I urged it. Not that she needed urging.

She came to our house the next week, with all her luggage. Louisa Rupert must have been then about eight-and-thirty, a little younger than my dear mamma. She began by being indulgent and deferent to me; always talking of me, always praising me up to papa more that I liked—more than I thought was genuine. She deferred to my father's tastes, she humoured his prejudices, she humoured mine, and she was ever lively and pleasant, and made things comfortable. We had used to think Louisa Rupert ill-tempered, but she now appeared to be quite an example of sweetness.

They, these Miss Ruperts, had warned my father against governesses: they had more cause to warn him against themselves. I feel ashamed to write it, but I cannot record anything but the truth. Ere fifteen months had elapsed since our heavy day of mourning and sorrow, Louisa Rupert had become my father's wife—the second Mrs. Dixon.

Nothing was said to me of the projected match. The first person

to whisper the rumour to me was Charlotte, one of our long-attached servants. I had thought it odd when, in January, Miss Rupert left our house to pass a month, as she said, at a distant watering-place. She had a married sister living there, a Mrs. Arrowsmith, but still I wondered that she did not choose a more genial season. Three weeks afterwards papa also left, and then Charlotte told me what people said—that they were gone to be married.

How angry I was!—with Charlotte. Had she told me I was gone to be married, I could not have been more indignantly disbelieving.

"Charlotte, how *dare* you assert so disgraceful a calumny?"

"Dear Miss Jane," she answered, "you are the only person who has not foreseen it for some months past. I fear you will find it true."

Alas! I did. In two or three days a letter came from my father, setting all doubt at rest. He had just married Lousia Rupert. He said he hoped the step would conduce to the happiness of us all, and that he had entered upon it as much for my sake as for his own.

Happiness! For my sake! I am not naturally passionate, but a storm of passion, of agony, shook me then. It was not because Louisa Rupert was exalted to authority over me; I thought not of that; but that he should so soon have forgotten my angel mother—should have lowered himself to take another wife in haste so unseemly. At least, it seemed so to me. I think it must seem so to all daughters who have to experience the like. I cannot describe the wretched feeling that oppressed my heart, and it is not fit I should. It seemed as if the shame of the act was reflected upon me.

I had thrown myself on the sofa, sobbing with all my might and main, when some one, who must have come in unheard, touched me on the sleeve and spoke, half laughingly: "Jane, how foolish you are!"

It was Lionel Rupert. A fine-grown, handsome youth of twenty, sunny-tempered as the day, and merry-hearted, a rare favourite in Teversham. He was first cousin to Betsy and Louisa, and, since the latter's residence with us, had been frequently at our house. My father liked him.

I sat up and strove for calmness, rather annoyed that Lionel should have seen me giving way so, for he had a propensity for ridicule and joking. However, he did not ridicule me then.

"If I were you, Jane, I should show myself more of a man than to sob like that."

"You don't know the cause; you don't know the—the shameful"—I hesitated in my choice of a word, and then brought out a bad one—"news I have received this morning."

"I have heard it," he replied. "But all your sobbing and distress will not mend it."

"Where did you hear it, Lionel?"

"Oh, all Teversham has heard it. And Charlotte rushed to the door, full of it, when she saw me coming."

"Oh, Lionel!" I cried out, in my grief, as I had once before cried out to my father, "if I had but died with mamma!"

"If you would but abstain from talking nonsense!" retorted Lionel. "You are too old for it."

"Of course you cannot enter into my feelings, or take my part," was my resentful answer. "As your cousin, you naturally regard this marriage with a favourable eye. She *is* your cousin, you know. Had she chosen to marry papa in mamma's lifetime, perhaps you would have seen no harm in it."

Lionel laughed, and bent on me his clear bright eyes, in which I read a sympathy he would not suffer his lips to utter.

"Jane, I'll bring an action against you for calumniating me. You know my sweet cousin Louisa was always my bête noire. Betsy's an old dragon, but she is better than Louisa. For my part, I would have espoused the ancient apple-woman at the corner rather than Miss Louisa Rupert.

And so, Lionel talked and soothed me into reason. Somehow he could always comfort me.

At the end of a week they came home. I had schooled myself into calmness. I could not receive my father as I used to; *I could not;* for the feeling of reverence, the respect and veneration due to a parent from a child, had left my heart for ever. He must have noticed the difference, but he said nothing and went out for a stroll in the village. I was cool to Mrs. Dixon, too cool, but I was not insolent; a true friend in Teversham had given me judicious Christian counsel, and I was really striving to profit by it. But when Mrs. Dixon went upstairs to take possession for the first time of the bedroom and dressing-room which had been my dearest mother's, I ran up to my own chamber and sobbed aloud in my great sorrow.

Papa brought Lionel Rupert back to dinner. I think now, though it did not strike me then, that he feared the family party, that first evening, might be awkward, and deemed it not amiss to ask a stranger to it. Lionel laughed and talked as usual, and began telling them what had transpired in the village during their absence.

In the midst of it, Phillis threw open the drawing-room door, and spoke. "Dinner is on the table—sir." She hesitated between the two last words, as I have marked it. In my mother's time, she used to make the announcement to her; since, she had always made it to me; and now she preferred to make it to her master, rather than to her new mistress. I thanked the girl in my heart; but I don't know what that new mistress thought.

Charlotte stood in the dining-room as we went in. I advanced to the place at the head of the table. After mamma's death, no one had

occupied it till Miss Rupert came, and then my father had desired me to take it, which I did, and had taken it ever since. I had no intention to be rude to Mrs. Dixon in taking it now: I declare it had never once crossed my mind that that seat must be mine no longer. I was thinking but of Charlotte—that she need not have troubled herself to come in for only Lionel Rupert: it not being customary for her to help to wait, except when there was company. Though perhaps the servants thought this a special day. I bent my head down towards the cloth, expecting my father to say grace; but there seemed a delay, and I looked up. Standing by my side, waiting for me to vacate the seat, was Mrs. Dixon, and in the same moment Charlotte came up and whispered:

"Miss Jane, Phillis has put your seat here to-day."

I darted from the place as if a hornet had stung me, and went to the side seat, where Louisa Rupert used to sit. Had I committed a crime, I could not have felt more wretchedly confused and guilty: my throat felt choking, my cheeks were burning, and I glanced across the table at Lionel, to gather what he could think of me. I gathered nothing, for his face was turned up towards the lights of the chandelier, and he began telling of a new-fashioned one, just introduced at the Hall, which had come sliding down on to the floor, in the midst of an evening party, narrowly escaping the wig and head of old Sir Actæon.

Dinner passed off pretty well; thanks, I believe, to Lionel; and the maids quitted the room. Papa cracked some filberts and handed them to me.

"Thank you," I said. "I will pass these to Mrs. Dixon."

"Keep them yourself, Jane; I will crack more for *your mamma*," was the reply, with an unmistakable emphasis.

"I prefer not to take any, papa." I answered. "Mrs. Dixon can have these." And my emphasis on "Mrs. Dixon" was quite as forcible as his own.

"No quarrelling about filberts," interposed Lionel, in his straightforward, off-hand way; "they need not go begging. If Jane won't eat them, there are plenty of us who will. Try this fine pear, Jane. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Dixon, I did not perceive that the salt stopped with me."

Ah, well! Lionel might rattle on and make peace if he liked, but my heart felt as if it were breaking.

There was no change at home for several months, no perceptible one, for Mrs. Dixon knew well how to play her cards, and she let it come on gradually. Miss Dixon's wishes were still consulted, Miss Dixon's pleasure was still deferred to: if the servants demanded instructions, they would occasionally be told to "ask Miss Dixon." She was weaving her meshes round my father to mould him to her entire will; she was

working to make herself first in all things, and his daughter second and to have striven for that too palpably in the early days of her authority, would have been a dangerous game.

Do not let the reader mistake me. Of course I did not expect to be first now: I could not and did not wish it; but I felt sure she was only acting a part, and I knew not where it would land me.

Before the change came—for it did come—Lionel Rupert was gone. The only child of a proud and needy man, it was intended that he should be proud and needy too. The Ruperts had never soiled their hands with a profession, not they. Sir Actæon Rupert, the reigning baronet, lived in profusion at the Hall, and the other branches of the family lived in genteel pinching elsewhere, never forgetting that they were RUPERTS. How the funds had been found to bestow upon Lionel the noble education he had received, nobody could imagine; unless Sir Actæon, who had a liking for his young kinsman, had supplied them. But of what service was Lionel's education likely to be to him? His father would not let him use it. He was too poor to buy him a commission, and little else would have suited the pride of the Ruperts. So Lionel remained perforce at home, shooting, fishing, idling, and plunging into young men's mischief. But at length his father died, and there came liberty for Lionel. He decided forthwith to betake himself to London.

It was in July when he came to bid us farewell, six months after my father's marriage. The pony-carriage was at the door when he came in: papa was going to drive out with Mrs. Dixon. The latter came down with her things on.

"I cannot make out what it is that is taking you to London, Lionel," she said. "You surely cannot contemplate any step that would dishonour the family?"

"Not I," cried Lionel. "I'll take care of the honour of the family."

"Not put yourself into any—any office—any profession: in short, not attempt any means of earning money to eke out your income," went on Mrs. Dixon. "It would be a disgrace upon the Ruperts for ever."

"One they would never get over," gravely answered Lionel.

Lionel took leave; papa and Mrs. Dixon drove out; and I leaned my aching head on the arm of the sofa, for some feeling, akin to despair, had laid hold of me. But Lionel suddenly came back; I heard his step outside. In a moment he was in the room and had closed the door. I started up, and blushed like a guilty thing.

"Jane, I have a word to say to you, and I may as well say it now, for it is hard to tell when we shall meet again. I shall not come back here until I have built up my fortunes. I don't know how it is to be done, yet. I have the will, and I must make the way."

"Lionel!" I exclaimed, in surprise. "Build up your fortunes! What have you just been saying to Mrs. Dixon?"

Lionel burst into a laugh. It seemed to intimate that what he said to Mrs. Dixon need not always be taken for gospel. Before he spoke, his voice and manner had changed to seriousness.

"I told her I would not disgrace the Ruperts: I hope I never shall. But their notions of disgrace differ from mine, Jane. They attach ignominy to work; I, on the contrary, think it lies with idleness. I feel, as an accountable being, that my time and talents were not given me to waste, and I purpose to employ them in the best way that fate or fortune may offer."

"Whatever will they say, Lionel? Sir Actæon will have another fit."

"What will Sir Actæon care for me? I shall be far enough away. They may never hear of me, and I daresay will never ask after me. But I told you I had a word to say. It has struck me, Jane, that when my fortunes *are* built up, I shall want somebody to share them. I would rather have Jane Dixon than anybody else in the world."

I was so confused as scarcely to understand him. But my heart beat against my side with a sensation of rapture which had never yet had place there.

"And as I may be building up this castle in the air while I build up my fortunes," went on Lionel, "I thought it well to assure myself, beforehand, that it was one not entirely without foundation. What say you, Jane?"

I said nothing. Lionel drew my face to his.

"God bless you, Jane!" he whispered. "Remember, it may be years."

YEARS indeed went on, and there were changes in our home. Old Mrs. Rupert was dead, and Miss Betsy had come to live with us. I suppose she paid something, but these details were not spoken of to me. It seemed that the chief business of her life was to make mischief about me. I had not a will of my own: she contradicted and thwarted me in the most trifling things. Mrs. Dixon had long treated me with indifference, almost contempt. She exercised supreme authority, and I was regarded in the house as a mere cipher, put down entirely. She had gained completely the ear of my father: to appeal to him in the domestic bickerings which often arose, was worse than useless, so far as I was concerned, for he always took the part of his wife. She had contrived to imbue him with a spirit of resentment, of dissatisfaction, towards me; so that, happen what would, *I* was in the wrong. The servants were fresh, except Charlotte; Mrs. Dixon was their absolute mistress; I was scarcely regarded as my father's daughter. And there were young children in our house now, who certainly did not contribute to its peace and comfort. For these three children, only one additional servant was engaged; so that our former orderly mode of living was broken into. Whether my father's income,

a fixed one, would not really allow greater expenditure, or whether Mrs. Dixon went upon the saving plan from choice, I could not tell. I know that I was much stinted, and could not dress as I used to do. The servants grumbled, and said they had too much work, Charlotte especially, upon which Mrs. Dixon said that she might leave; but Charlotte chose to remain on.

Oh! mine was an unhappy life! Domestic disorder and discomfort, where formerly all was so regular and peaceful; humiliating slights cast daily upon me; innocent visits of social intercourse refused to me! The children allowed me no time for visiting, Mrs. Dixon said, and *I* was expected to attend to them quite as much as any servant. Save Charlotte, there were none around to care for me, or speak to me a pleasant word, and my spirit was almost broken. In my twenty-second year, I felt like a worn-out woman, caring little for life.

But where was Lionel? Ah! for all these years he had never noticed me by letter or message; had never given token that those loving words of promise spoken on his departure were really meant in earnest, or ever to be realized. I had long ago ceased to regard them as real, and striven to school my poor, credulous, disappointed heart to the evident truth. Lionel was no longer in London. Soon after his arrival there, news came that he had got into something, "some office," and the Ruperts, from Sir Actæon down to Mrs. Dixon, looked very blue and dumb, and finally discarded him from their memories. To speak of Lionel Rupert after this, would have been high treason. Three years subsequently, on the breaking out of the war with Russia, we heard that he had gone to the East, in the Commissariat department.

And the war went on, and old Sir Actæon died, and his son Sir Otway came into power at the Hall. The second and only remaining son, Charles, was with his regiment in the Crimea.

We were sitting one day in the dining-room, which was now little better than a nursery. I had the youngest child, an infant, on my lap —I generally had one or other of them—and papa was reading at a distant table, when Mr. Wall, a distant relation of my mother's, entered. "Don't disturb yourselves," he said; "I have only stepped in for a moment to tell you the sad news. I suppose you cannot have heard it yet. I never met with anything so mournful in the whole course of my life. You must prepare yourselves for a shock, ladies, for I have two deaths to tell you of."

Miss Betsy reached out for her smelling-salts, but the rest of us sat quietly still.

"Sir Otway got into a row this morning. He was out early, crossing his grounds, and found some men stealing off with game. He accosted them, and they said they had bought it; but he said it was his—as it no doubt was. An altercation ensued. They were insolent, and Sir Otway was fiery. Young blood will be young blood, and Sir

Otway has inherited his father's hasty temper. They came to blows, or close upon it, and when Sir Otway reached the Hall he was in a fearful state of excitement. There lay a despatch just arrived from the East—black seal, mourning edges, official look, and all the rest of it. Poor Sir Otway opened it, and, in the act of reading its contents, fell dead."

Mrs. Dixon screamed.

"How very shocking!" exclaimed my father. "Is he really dead?"

"He is really and truly dead," replied Mr. Wall. "Died as he was falling. Not an hour ago."

"Tell the servants to close the shutters," sobbed Miss Betsy, hysterically. "Our poor cousin!"

"But what was the cause? what did he die of?" interrupted my father.

"Disease of the heart, there's no doubt. Of course it will be ascertained at the *post-mortem*. His heart was thought not to be sound, you know, and the morning's excitement must have hastened on the crisis. But——"

"The last time I ever saw Otway Rupert I told him he was looking ill," burst in Miss Betsy.

"Well—yes—perhaps he was," assented Mr. Wall, in a snappish tone, as if not pleased at being interrupted. "But you have not heard all. The letter brought news of his brother Charles's death. He was killed from the bursting of a shell, in the trenches before Sebastopol."

We sat speechless with horror; almost questioning the truth of Mr. Wall's words. The unexpected death of two brothers, both so fearfully sudden, was a calamity surely unparalleled.

"Whether it was the excitement of the quarrel alone, or that, combined with the shock of the news, that killed Sir Otway, will never be decided," proceeded Mr. Wall. "But the poor young men are both dead. Sir Otway was passionately attached to his brother. Hark!"

They were ringing out the passing-bell. We listened, holding in the breath. Yes; *for two*. I shivered in my seat.

"What are you about, Jane?" demanded Mrs. Dixon. "You will have the baby's frock in the fire. Be careful, if you please. Mr. Wall, who says Sir Otway had disease of the heart? I never heard it."

"Because they kept it quiet. But he *had*. I met the surgeon just now, and he began to talk of it. Lady Rupert, in her lifetime, could not bear it to be hinted at. Sir Otway knew of it himself."

"I knew of it, too," interposed Miss Betsy. "Louisa, do have the shutters closed."

"Ring and order it to be done," said my father. "Who is the next heir?" he added, closing his book, and coming forward. "Let me see; I declare I don't remember who the next heir is, Wall."

"Why, Master Lionel, of course."

"Lionel!" I uttered, half springing from my seat. "Impossible!"

"Indeed, he is, Jane," was Mr. Wall's answer. "Little as he, or anybody else, could have anticipated it, Lionel Rupert is now the inheritor. I'll be bound the thought never crossed that young fellow's mind, that he might one day step into the baronetcy."

"Pay attention to the baby, Jane," angrily repeated Mrs. Dixon again. "Mind your own business. What is it to you who has succeeded? They are not your relations. What are you shaking for?"

What indeed? What was Lionel to me? If the faintest possible hope had ever lingered in my soul, this event destroyed it. Sir Lionel Rupert was not likely to remember poor Jane Dixon.

Another twelvemonth passed away. Sir Lionel lingered in the Crimea, and the Hall was shut up. It was understood that he had given up his post in the Commissariat, but stopped out there "to see the fun." Just before the end of the twelvemonth, however, news again came from him: he had arrived in London, and was coming home.

Christmas-eve was the day fixed for his arrival, and all the Ruperts were in an exalted state of mind; each one secretly hoping to be especially singled out by the young baronet more than the rest. Otway and Charles Rupert, haughty lads, had held themselves at a due distance from their poorer relatives; but Lionel had been of the poor ones, entirely one of themselves, hail-fellow-well-met with all. Mrs. Dixon and Betsy Rupert monopolised all the arrangements into their own hands, and managed to ingratiate themselves wonderfully with the steward, to whom Sir Lionel had entrusted the control of his affairs. It was decided by them that he should be welcomed home by a grand entertainment: a ball given at his own house the night of his arrival. My father suggested, in his quiet way, that an entertainment might be out of place, considering the melancholy circumstances which had led to Lionel's succession. But he was not listened to. That was a year ago, they said. And so it was. Poor Otway and his brother Charles were forgotten: the dead soon are; and invitations in Sir Lionel Rupert's name, he knowing nothing whatever about it, went out to all the county.

Mrs. Dixon, leaving her children for once to the care of servants, and ordering me to see to them as well, was at the Hall, morning, noon, and night, superintending and giving orders. I believe the steward began to think—and others, too—that she took a great deal upon herself; but she *was* the first cousin of Sir Lionel. She and Miss Betsy sent a hasty despatch for their sister's second daughter, Kate Arrowsmith, a girl about my own age, and she arrived at our

house. They might, in courtesy, have invited the eldest, Maria: but she was plain and awkward, I heard them whisper to one another, whereas Kate was beautiful. I wondered what looks could have to do with it, but I had not to wonder long.

Mrs. Dixon and Miss Betsy had been concocting a scheme; a little plan; and it oozed out. Charlotte got hold of it in some way, and she spoke of it to me. They intended that Kate Arrowsmith and her charms should subdue the heart and win the hand of Sir Lionel Rupert, and were thus planning for it. She was to be introduced to him, and take his heart by storm, at the projected entertainment. Charlotte also got hold of something else—that I was not to be invited to make one at the Hall on the ball night. I believe the girl must have listened to conversation not meant for her, but I did not accuse her of it. I felt that what she said was true; for it wanted now but a few days to the ball, and nothing whatever had been said to me directly about it. The omission had not struck me before.

How angry I was! how pained and hurt! Every indignant feeling was aroused, and I determined to go if possible. It was not that I cared to see Sir Lionel; at least, I thought I did not; for every vestige of former hope had long died within me, and our meeting would be painful rather than otherwise: but they had no right to put upon me in this way, and trample me, as Charlotte called it, in the dust.

The morning after Charlotte's communication they set out as usual to the Hall—I mean Mrs. Dixon and her sister—Kate Arrowsmith being squeezed in between them in the pony-chaise. I immediately went in search of my father, and found him on the sofa by the dressing-room fire, playing with his little four-year old boy. Charlotte was in the adjoining bed-room, dusting, but I did not care for that. I stood before him, my colour flushing.

"Papa! I have gathered a hint that I am not to go to the entertainment at the Hall."

"Indeed I don't know, Jane. Why are you not?"

"I have come to ask you why. Mrs. Dixon says I am not."

"Well, if she says it, I suppose you cannot go."

"Sir," I said, my heart rising, "do you remember that day, years ago, when you and I sat together on that very sofa, weeping; when you had come in from laying my poor mother in the ground? You said, then, that we would be all in all to each other. How has that promise been carried out?"

"Why, what's the matter with you, Jane?" he exclaimed, looking startled.

"I could have borne much from you, papa: I have borne much: but to be ill-used, despised, treated as of no account, taunted by her whom you have put over me in mamma's place——"

I was choking with sobs, and could not continue.

"Jane! Jane! whatever is it? Speak out."

"I will not speak of the past—now—but of this fresh indignity sought to be put upon me. It *is* an indignity, sir, and you ought to see it as such, when offered to your daughter. Everyone goes to this entertainment but myself. Look around, papa, and see if there is one young lady being left out. Mrs. Dixon and her sister have actually brought their niece here, miles across the country, to be present at it; but I, your daughter, am to be excluded."

"Jane, I think you ought to go," he replied, after a minute's uncomfortable thought. "I see no reason against it. You shall go. I suppose the children can be left by us all for one evening."

"And if they couldn't, sir," interposed Charlotte, who came from the bedroom at the moment, "it would not be Miss Jane's place to stop with them. What are us servants good for, if we can't take care of three little children?"

She passed through the room as she spoke, and my father turned to me.

"Dry your tears, Jane. I tell you, you shall go."

"It is not *to go* that I am weeping," I almost indignantly cried. "You said—that day—when I wished I had died with mamma, that time would come to me with healing on its wings. Papa, there is no healing in my chequered life; I still wish I had died with her. It had been happier for me."

"Pray, Jane, do not talk in this uncomfortable strain. If things are so very miserable for you, they must be altered. I will see to it. Do you want anything else now?"

"I have no dress to go in to the Hall. How shall I get one?"

"Dress! You must ask Mrs. Dixon about that."

"No, sir. To ask her would not give me one. I should be put off with orders to wear an old one, be it ever so unfit. This very day they are taking Kate to try on the one being made for her. Many a child is treated with more respect and consideration than I am, papa. I will not ask Mrs. Dixon."

"Dear me, Jane!" he somewhat peevishly uttered, "I don't understand these things. Dress! Well—order yourself one. Will that do?"

"Thank you, sir."

"And let the bill come in to me. Quietly, you know."

"Yes, thank you, papa."

Charlotte was lingering on the stairs when I went down.

"Miss Jane, are you to go?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well, that's all right. I was determined them children shouldn't stand in your light, if I could put in a word against it. If Mrs. Dixon and the other one were not everlastingly drumming round

master with their ill-natured counsels, things would soon come straight between you and him. If you will take my advice, Miss Jane, you will not let them know that you are going; they would ferret out some way to put you off."

I did take Charlotte's advice, and said nothing. They never dreamt I was going. In their preparations for this ball, their consultations as to dress and other details, there was no reference made to me, though carried on in my presence. Once there arose a great discussion—whether Kate should wear in her hair blue flowers, the colour of her dress, or gold wheat-ears.

"I wonder which Lionel would admire most?" exclaimed Miss Betsy, unconsciously betraying the bent of their thoughts.

"I dare say Lionel would not notice the one or the other," I interposed. "Men never do. They see no difference ——"

Mrs. Dixon turned to me her haughty face, reproof on its every feature. "*Sir* Lionel, if you please, Miss Dixon, when you speak of my cousin." And a retort was on my lips: but I kept it in.

Monday, Christmas-eve, came round in due course. As its evening drew on, we heard that Sir Lionel had arrived. Our house was in a bustle; all the ladies beginning to dress long before there was any need of it. Charlotte snatched a moment from her attendance in Mrs. Dixon's room, where Kate was dressed, to assist me. I had chosen white crape, for we were in mourning for a relation of my father's. There was nothing fine about it or about me; but when it was on, and Charlotte turned me round and round, she declared I should look the most lady-like girl in the room. As to the few ornaments I wore, they were only jet. My own dear mamma's pearls, which ought to have been mine, were on somebody else that night, setting off her heavy black satin.

I did not go down till the last moment. They were all assembled round the dining-room fire, waiting for the carriage. Kate's face looked lovely, but not her dress; there was too much of it: satin, lace, gauze, ribbons, all in too great profusion. Miss Betsy wore a crimson velvet, which had been in the family twenty years. They stared at me in astonishment.

"What means this?" broke forth Mrs. Dixon. "What are *you* dressed for?"

"Jane appealed to me, and I said she was to go," hastily observed my father, with more decision in his tone than he commonly used. "For her to be the only young lady omitted in this very general entertainment, would have reflected an unnecessary slight upon our house."

"Oh, I am glad Jane's going," exclaimed Kate, in her good-natured way. But the others looked as black as thunder.

"Jane *can not* go," returned Mrs. Dixon, with emphasis, not

attempting to suppress her passion; "the carriage will not hold five. It is impossible that our dresses can be crushed."

"I will go on the box," said my father.

"Indeed you will not," she answered. "I don't want to have to nurse you all the winter."

"You need not fear having me to nurse through my sitting outside," he rejoined. "There is an extraordinary change in the weather, and to-night it is positively warm."

My father was right about the weather. The cold which had prevailed for some days past, so intense as rarely to have been equalled in England, left us that Christmas-eve. It was then, as he said, warm.

"I don't care whether it's warm or cold," returned Mrs. Dixon, in answer to him, "you are not going outside. Don't you see the embarrassment your obstinacy is causing?" she sharply asked, turning to me.

"The carriage can take us at twice," said my father.

"Yes! And have double fare to pay! What next?"

"Louisa," he resumed, "Jane will go to this party—for the reason I have mentioned. And she has my promise. If the carriage cannot take us all at once, it must make two courses. Now, I have said it."

For the carriage, as you will understand, was hired for the night. When the children came on, and expenses increased with the advent of the second Mrs. Dixon, our close carriage was laid down.

Mrs. Dixon's eyes caught my dress. "Where did you get that from?" she asked. "It is new."

"Yes. I ordered it at Mrs. Hill's," was my reply.

"What did it cost? Is it paid for?"

"I have not had the bill."

"Did *you* countenance this extravagance?" she inquired, turning to my father with a crimsoned face.

"Jane told me she had no dress fit to appear in. I don't suppose she had, as she rarely goes out.—What a time they are with this carriage!" he hastily added, escaping to the hall door to look out for it.

"Jane, how well you look!" exclaimed Kate. "Better than I. Aunt, I do wish I had fixed upon white, now that I see Jane."

"I'm sure Jane's nothing to look at."

The carriage drove up then. Mrs. Dixon had ordered a handsome one with a pair of fine horses. Papa and Charlotte came in together. Papa wanted to wait and go with me: Mrs. Dixon would not have it so. They went first, with Kate; I and Miss Betsy waited behind. Miss Betsy was in an awful temper, and kept up a running fire of reproaches at me till the carriage came back, and then all the way to the Hall. I did not answer them. My heart was full that night.

Her heart seemed full of petty spite. She would not give my name

to the servants, only her own ; and I heard shouted out, as we went in, "The Miss Ruperts." The rooms were very full. Miss Betsy did not attempt to find or approach the host, but pushed her way to an obscure corner, and seated me in it, and sat guard over me. There was a cluster of seats at that place, and we were hidden behind other people. She thought—I know she did—that I should not dance if she could prevent it.

I felt sick with agitation, knowing how soon I should see *him*. I did not know him at first. He was taller—or else he looked it—and so very manly-looking, and his auburn hair had grown dark ; but he had still the merry eye and sweet smile of Lionel Rupert. He was dancing with Lord Aitesbury's daughter, Lady Augusta ; a beautiful girl, especially to my jealous eye. On Mrs. Dixon's arrival, as I heard later, he had asked after me. She just replied that I had not come ; and gave no further explanation.

"I hope you approve of the arrangements we have made for you, Lionel," she had hastened to say. "I, for one, have been active in your service."

"Oh, they are first rate," he replied. "But this affair to-night took me by surprise."

"You must look upon yourself in the light of a guest to-night, and give yourself no trouble," said Mrs. Dixon. "So many relatives are here to take it off your hands. We have planned everything for you, even to your partners. Kate—I may as well hand her over to your charge now—is to have the honour of the first dance with you."

"Well, really," cried Sir Lionel, opening his eyes rather widely, "though feeling myself, of course, under eternal obligations to my kind relatives, and hoping to repay their exertions later, I would prefer, in the matter of partners, to exercise my own choice. Kate, my dear, we are cousins, and it will not do to take you first. The dons of the county, smarting under my neglect, would say that Lionel Rupert gave speedy evidence of not having been reared to fill the place of Sir Actæon."

And thus, in the easy, lighted-hearted, but very pleasant way that he used to put down people in the former days, did he put down Mrs. Dixon now. That lady found herself conducted by him to a seat of honour and left in it, Kate Arrowsmith by her side.

And I sat on, on in my obscure corner. Oh, it was, to me, a dreary evening ! I saw Sir Lionel constantly, now talking to the heads of the grand families, now walking or dancing with their daughters. *No hope* was left in my heart ; I have said it ; but to find that Lionel never once cared to approach me with a civil word of greeting, was a pointed neglect I was not prepared for. My eyes, in spite of myself, kept filling with tears, and the bitterness at my heart was keen to bear.

"Who is that pretty girl, concealing herself there?" I heard some stranger ask. And though it was myself he alluded to, the admiration brought me no pleasure: heart and spirit were alike too low.

Once more I saw Lionel come down the room. He had Kate on his arm. In passing our corner, his eye fell on the crimson velvet that nearly smothered me, and he halted.

"Miss Betsy, I really believe! looking younger than ever. You never mean to say you have been hiding yourself in this nook all the night!"

She stood up and planted herself and her crimson velvet right before me, and she was taller than I. But I rose also, and inclined my head a little aside. He saw me, hesitated in surprise; and then a flush, deeper than the Crimea browning, dyed his face.

"Jane! Miss Dixon! Is it really you? I understood you were not here to-night." And what I said, as he clasped my hand, I did not know, and never have known.

"Wait there," he said, in a hasty accent. "Excuse me a moment, Jane."

Turning away, he took Kate to her place by Mrs. Dixon. Then returned, and extended his hand to draw me out of the corner.

"What do you want with Jane?" spoke up Miss Betsy, sharply. "Let her be. She is as well here as anywhere else, especially after coming to-night in opposition to everybody. Go back to Kate: I thought you were going to dance with her."

"Kate is in no hurry," he replied. "Take my arm, Jane." And before I had recovered my scattered senses, I was walking through the room with Sir Lionel.

"Jane, you don't look well," he said, breaking the silence. "You are thin and pale. You have not been happy."

"Not very," I answered.

"Things at home go crossways, I expect. There are children now, I hear. But to think that you should have been ensconced in that prison-corner all the evening! I cannot make it out. I thought I had seen everyone present. I never even heard your name announced. Why did you not come forward and speak to me?"

"Miss Betsy took me there at once, and kept me there. She did not attempt to go up to speak to you when we came in."

"Blessed Miss Betsy! I'll be even with her. I remember her tricks of old. Jane, did you wonder that you never heard from me? —all these years!"

"I did at first. Not much afterwards. Not at all since you have become Sir Lionel."

"I was trying to build up my fortunes—as I told you—but the construction got on so slowly that I was not justified in writing: and I felt that I had been anything but justified in having spoken to you as I did. Matters are changed now."

They were indeed, for me—since I last saw Lionel. The hope of that hour had given place to the despair of this. He did not speak; and I, who felt the silence awkward, interrupted it at random.

"Have you come home to remain, Sir Lionel?"

"Yes. If my old friends will call me Lionel again, without the 'Sir.'"

He looked at me pointedly as he spoke, and I blushed deeply. We had wandered on, I did not know where, far from the reception-rooms.

"Jane, do you think my accession to wealth and position ought to change my friends towards me?"

I blushed again, and would have stammered some words that did not come. *Why* did I blush? Because there was that, in his manner, which had set my heart wildly beating.

"Has it changed you, Jane? How silent you are! You know that when the fortunes were built up, Lionel Rupert was to want a wife. I told you that wife—if I had my wish—should be no other than Jane Dixon: I say so still. You agreed with me then, Jane: will you dissent now?"

"But—*may* we go in here?" I interrupted, in my agitation, for Lionel had opened the door of a small room, which had a blazing fire but no lights, evidently one not meant for guests.

"May we! My dear, you forget that I am in my own house. This is to be my smoking sanctum. I hope you will allow smoking, Jane."

I could bear up no longer. I leaned my head on the table and wept happier tears than it had ever been my lot to shed. Lionel raised it, thinking perhaps his breast was a better resting-place than the table, and there they gradually ceased to flow.

"But your position is so changed now," I sobbed. "They will say I am not good enough for Sir Lionel Rupert."

"I dare say they will—behind my back," laughed Lionel. "Especially Miss Betsy and your papa's revered wife. But they dare not say it to my face, Jane. They dare not dictate to me now; that's one comfort. I am the head of the clan."

"But, Lionel ——"

"What, Jane?"

I could not say. And Lionel took from my lips the kiss he had left upon them that far-ago day, and led me back to the rooms.

"I am pitiably dull here, a wretched single man," suddenly said Lionel to my father, as we were leaving—all five in the coach. "I wish you would invite me to join your Christmas dinner to-morrow."

"With the greatest pleasure, Sir Lionel," my father promptly answered, suppressing his surprise. "You must take us as you find us."

"And next Christmas day—all of us being alive and well—you will come to me here," added Lionel. "I engage you beforehand."

Mrs. Dixon and Miss Betsy were full of exultation. They set down

Lionel's self-invitation to Kate's score, and told that young lady that her visions of the future might be dyed in rose-colour. They ordered additions to the dinner; they ordered Kate to dress herself in her best; and when she came down in her showy attire she quite cast into the shade me and my black silk, which had but a little white lace on its low body and sleeves.

Sir Lionel came only at the hour when we were waiting to go in to dinner. He gave his arm to Mrs. Dixon, and was then placing himself by me; but Mrs. Dixon desired him to take the seat between herself and Kate. Lionel did so, and looked at me across the table with a half-smile. He was just the same Lionel as ever, free and merry.

"What, you here still, Charlotte!" he exclaimed. "I should have thought you were married, ages ago."

"It seems, sir, we are none of us in a hurry for that," answered Charlotte. "You are not married yourself, sir."

"Not yet," laughed Sir Lionel.

At dessert, to my great shock, for I was prepared for nothing of the sort, he told them I had promised to be his wife. I thought Mrs. Dixon would have fainted on the spot. Miss Betsy sat paralysed and speechless.

"Your wife! *Jane!*" stammered Mrs. Dixon.

"If her father will give her to me."

There was a pause; and then Mrs. Dixon spoke up, resentfully. But for the commotion she was in and the angry passion, I don't think even she would have said what she did. "It is well, Sir Lionel, that you should know Miss Dixon's circumstances have changed. She will now inherit but a small fortune. Our son—and daughters—have obliged Mr. Dixon to alter his will."

"I do not seek to marry Jane's money, I seek her for herself," replied Sir Lionel. "I would ask you, sir, to alter the will again, if I may so far presume," he added to my father, "and to leave Jane's name entirely out of it. As Lady Rupert, what you could give her would not be felt. The Rupert revenues are large, and I shall have the honour of proposing to you a good settlement."

My father grasped Sir Lionel's hand.

Mrs. Dixon spoke up again, her throat swelling hysterically. "It is a curiously sudden attachment, Sir Lionel! Too sudden, I fear, to last."

"Not at all sudden," answered Lionel. "I told Jane before I went away, that I had only one hope and aim in going—that of making my purse sufficiently weighty to justify my asking her to share it."

They sat, she and her sister, full of mortification; but Kate Arrowsmith stole round the table to whisper in my ear.

"Jane, let me stay and be your bridesmaid. I am very glad. I knew, when my aunts puffed me up about winning Sir Lionel, that it

was all double-distilled nonsense, and it went in at one ear and out at the other. Indeed, I am truly glad."

"Jane," was Sir Lionel's parting whisper to me that night, "I see it all. I shall take you out of this place as soon as may be. Keep your courage up a short while longer, my darling."

He did take me—in what Mrs. Dixon protested was "indecent" haste. "And if you don't mind, Jane Dixon, the parish will cry shame upon you!"

"I should like to hear it," said Lionel, in his laughing way. "I will take care of Jane and the parish too, Mrs. Dixon."

He did. And I and Charlotte have come to live at the Hall, for Lionel is now my dear husband. As he and I were sitting by the fire the other night, talking over the dinner of the evening when our people had been with us, Lionel suddenly declared we had been carrying out a command of Scripture.

"In what way, Lionel?"

"In regard to those two charming enemies of yours, Jane: Mrs. Dixon and Miss Betsy. We have been giving them food and drink, and heaping coals of fire on their heads."

"Lionel!"

"I am sure it was nothing less than coals of fire, Jane, to see you sit at the head of my table—Lady Rupert."

SMILES AND TEARS.

You bid me sing a gay refrain,
  Win from my lyre a note more glad,
And when I chose a brighter strain,
  Still—still you told me it was sad.

I did not mean it should be so,
  Nor was my wish to make you sigh;
But you are young, and do not know
  How joy and grief together lie.

There ever is a minor chord
  Struck somewhere in our earthly lays,
Ever a shadow on the sward
  Of brightest scenes whereon we gaze.

And while we may not heed the one
  Nor hear the other, each is there;
Yet lurking in the blithest tone,
  Yet darkening the landscape fair.

Thus, often scarcely knowing why,
  We cannot look without a tear;
And so it is we sometimes sigh,
  Tho' joyous be the song we hear.

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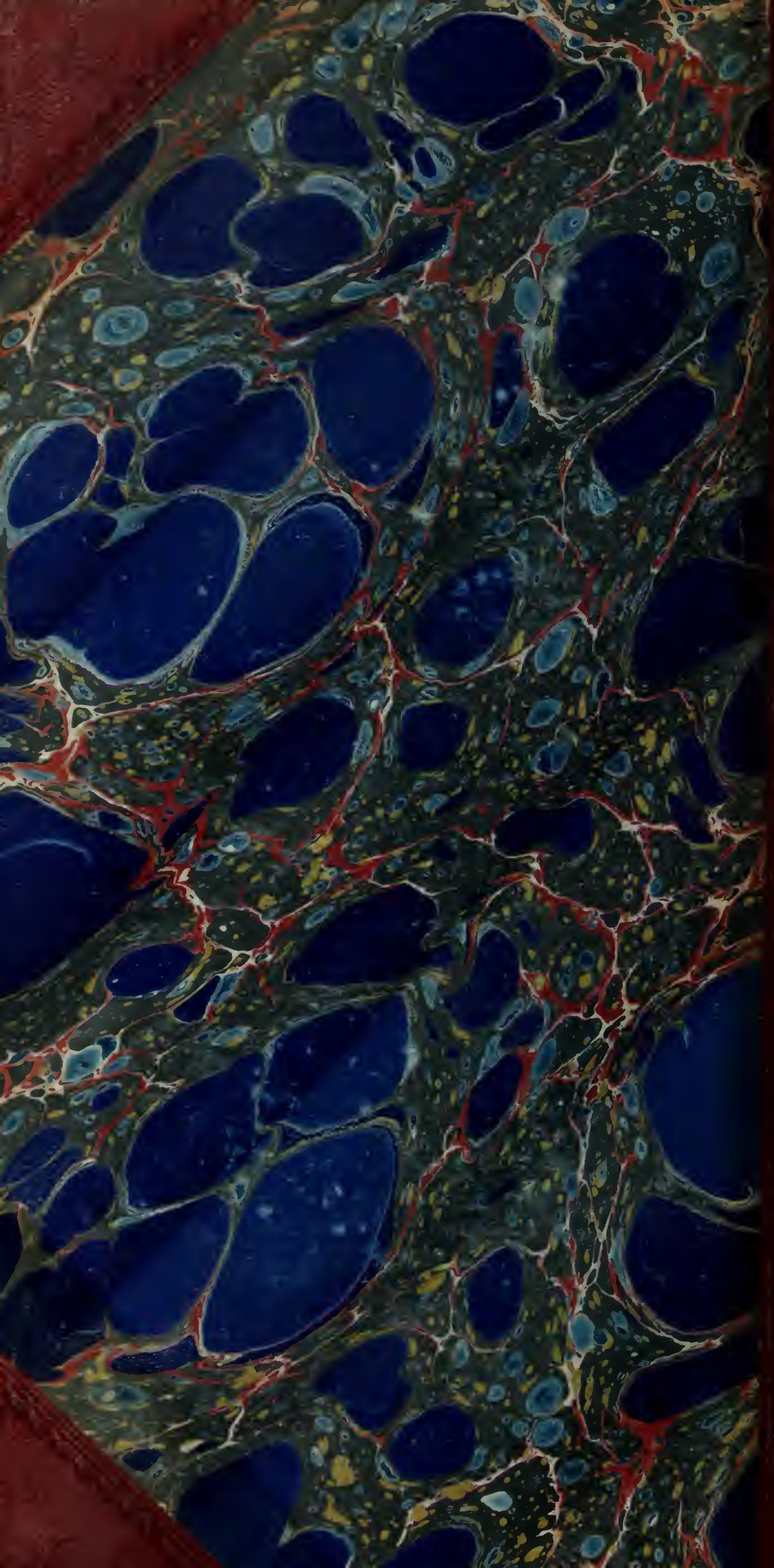
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